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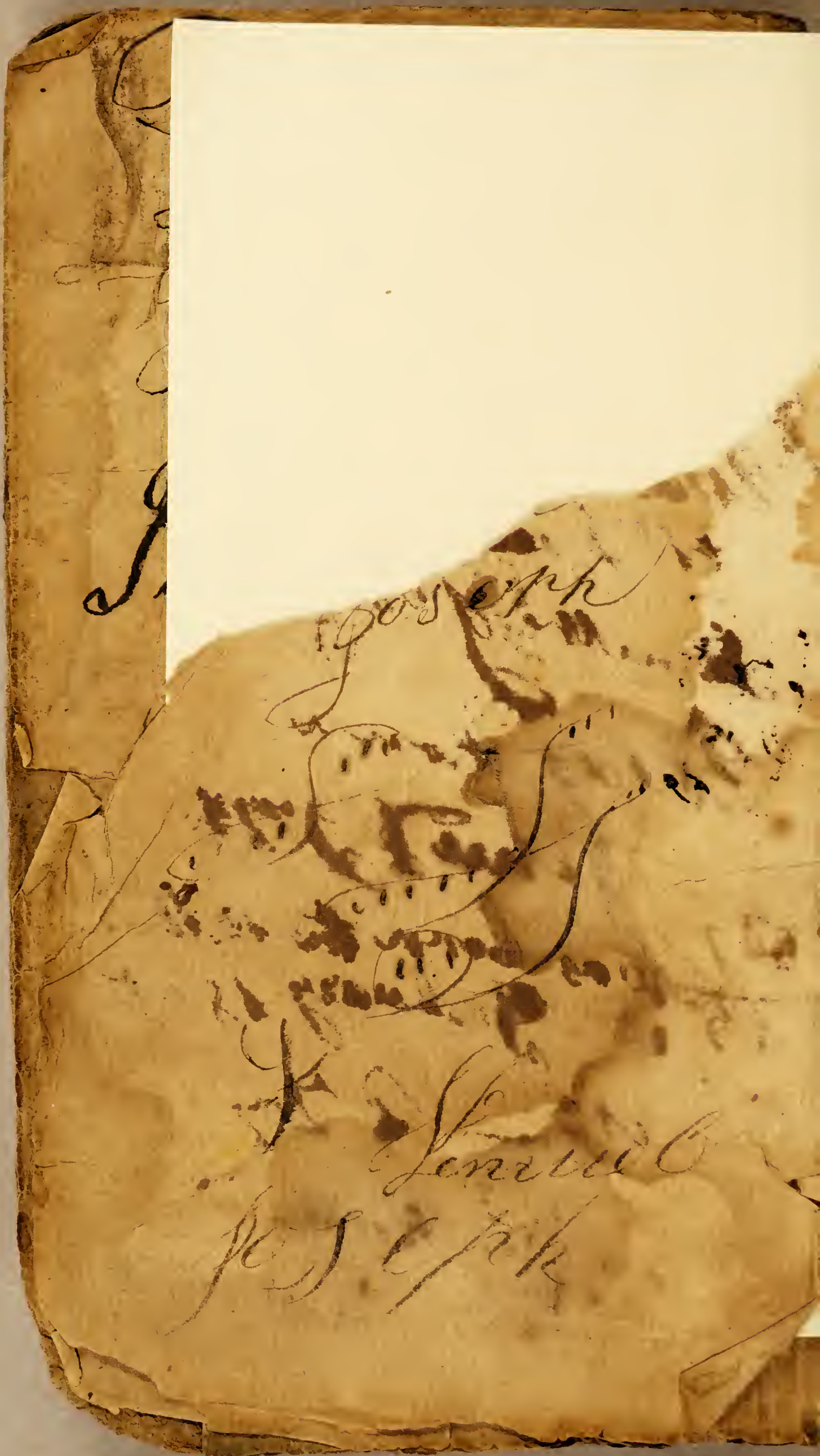

THE

Cauſes, Evils, and Cures,

OF

HEART AND CHURCH DIVISIONS;

EXTRACTED FROM THE WORKS OF

Mr. RICHARD BAXTER,

AND

Mr. JEREMIAH BURROUGHS.

Seek peace, and *purſue* it. Pſ. xxxiv. 14.

PHILADELPHIA:

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His Book wrote by
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Jane Joseph Patton
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TO THE

MINISTERS AND MEMBERS

OF THE

Methodiſt Epiſcopal Church.

Dear Brethren,

IN the courſe of my reading ſome years ago, I met with an old Book, written by a worthy paſtor in the Church, Mr. Jeremiah Burroughs, on Heart diviſions the evil of our times. *Feeling at that time the pain of a partial ſeparation in ſpirit and practice, from ſome who were as my brethren and ſons in the goſpel, that book proved as a balm and a bleſſing to my ſoul. I ſaw ſo clearly the evil conſequences of a diviſion, and how good and pleaſant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, that I began to abridge my obſolete but valuable*

book,

book, and earneſtly wiſhed, prayed, and ſtrove for unanimity.

Soon after I met with another old Book, entitled, The cure of church diviſions; *written by that venerable ſervant of* God, *the John Weſley of his day, in wiſdom, affection, zeal, and a pacific ſpirit; I mean Mr. Richard Baxter, of precious memory. Being highly pleaſed with his evangelical ſentiments, I concluded to make an extract from both, not doubting but it might be of great ſervice to the Church of Chriſt.*

And now I recommend it to all our miniſters, preachers, exhorters, and private members; beſeeching them to read it carefully, and with much prayer, that they may cultivate a ſpirit of unity and brotherly love.

I remain, dear brethren,

Your ſervant for Chriſt's ſake,

FRANCIS ASBURY.

THE

Cauſes, Evils, and Cures,

OF

HEART AND CHURCH DIVISIONS.

IT is evident that Chriſt did not diſpenſe gifts, and reveal truths ſo differently, to the end that there might be matter of ſtrife and contention in his church, and in human ſocieties; but rather that there might be the exerciſe of love, charity, forbearance, meekneſs, and long-ſuffering of one towards another. Chriſt bids us, yea, charges us, to be at peace amongſt ourſelves.

And in order to this, evils that are ſmall or uncertain, or come by accident, muſt rather be ſuffered, than any good that is great and certain ſhould be hindered. We muſt take heed, that in our zeal to oppoſe evil, we hinder not a greater good: If oppoſition of evil lies ſo far out of your reach that you cannot come at it but by hindering much good, you muſt be content to let it alone. And if the evils be ſuch as can be removed by ſupernatural means, we muſt not uſe violence for the removing of them.

This is *Machiavel*'s principle, *Divide et regna*. When diviſion is got into ſuch a principle as hath not only in the bowels of it ſomething to foment it, by what may be drawn from it, but when the principle carries diviſion in the very face of it, not collaterally, or by conſequent avowing it, but directly and immediately juſtifying it, then it grows ſtrong indeed; who can ſtand before it? When this is brought down to the people, it is expreſſed in that proverbial ſpeech, *It is good fiſhing in troubled waters*. "The diviſions of the times are our

advantages." Some men's ends are beſt ſerved, when church and ſtate are moſt divided. They never had ſuch comings-in as now they have.

When men love diviſion, and deſire the continuance of it—Firſt, To maintain that which is evil; Secondly, To aim at their own ends, not regarding what public miſchiefs come, ſo their own private ends may be anſwered; not caring what houſe be on fire, ſo their eggs may be roaſted; if they may have ſome poor, peddling, private benefit by them.

Not caring what the diviſions are, whether againſt good or againſt evil, if ſo be their own private advantages may be ſerved: This is abominable; and curſed is that man that wiſhes for, or rejoices in, or ſeeks the continuance of diviſions, for theſe baſe ends. Yea, that man is not worthy to breathe in ſo good a land as this is, who would not lay down his life to cure any diviſions and diſtractions that are amongſt us; who would not deſire with *Nazianzen*, as formerly *Jonah*, to be caſt into the ſea himſelf, if ſo be it might produce a calm in the republic. O cruel, hard-hearted man! who for his own private advantage, is not ſenſible of the woful miſeries of church and ſtate, yea of that dreadful diſhonour to the name of God, cauſed by our ſad diviſions, and miſerable diſtractions! Juſt it were for ſuch a man to be ſeparated to evil, and that his name ſhould be blotted out from under heaven.

We ſhould be well grounded in fundamentals before we make profeſſion of other truths. Seldom or never have you known men, who in the beginning of their profeſſion of religion, have laid out the firſt of their ſtrength in controverſies, but that they have come to nothing in their profeſſion. Be firſt well rooted in the faith, in the great things of godlineſs, thoſe things that are abſolutely neceſſary, and then thy ſearching into other truths of God which are for thy further edification will be ſeaſonable. Take heed that what thou doſt be not out of affectation of novelties, which men naturally have itching deſires after. It is very pleaſing to the fleſh to convey ſuch things to others, to be the

firſt;

firſt that ſhall bring to others things which before they underſtood not, whatſoever things they be.

Whatſoever is differing from others who are godly, is not to be held forth, and profeſſed without ſerious examination: we may venture more ſuddenly upon thoſe things which are generally received of the ſaints; but if they be differing, then we had need examine them over and over again with a jealous eye over our own hearts, and to take heed to our ſpirits, and how we behave ourſelves in ſuch things wherein we are like to go away, ſo much differing from ſo many of our chriſtian brethren.

Times of diviſion may break off men whoſe ſpirits were before unſound: they will never come in to join with the ſaints again, as they ſeemed to do in former times; but within awhile when this guſt is over, others may come in and ſhew themſelves to be all united in, and receive ſap from the ſame root.

Ye walk as men, ſays the apoſtle: ye ſhould not walk as men, ye ſhould walk as it becomes thoſe whoſe condition is raiſed above the condition of men, as it becomes chriſtians, the redeemed of the Lord. You ſay, *can fleſh and blood bear this? Can any man living bear this?* What if fleſh and blood, what if a man cannot? A chriſtian may, a member of Jeſus Chriſt, who is God-man, may. *Chryſoſtome* in one of his ſermons to the people of Antioch, brings in God's gracious dealing with *Cain*, as an example for them to imitate in their carriage towards thoſe who carry themſelves ill towards them: He brings them in alſo replying, God indeed was gentle and patient towards *Cain*, for he is God, he is above all paſſion, but we are men; he anſwers them, *therefore did the Son of God come down, that he might make you as near as may be to God.* The ſcripture ſays, *The ſaints are made partakers of the divine nature*, therefore do not ſay, we are but men. You muſt not walk as men, but as thoſe who are endued with the divine nature. It is a great charge which the Holy Ghoſt lays upon the *Corinthians*, that they walked but as men; yet many come ſhort of the lives

of

of men; they rather walk as dogs, as tygers, as wolves, Gal. v. 20. The fruits of the fleſh are hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, ſtrife, ſeditions, hereſies, envyings. All theſe are the cauſes of diviſions. Surely diviſions are the fruits of the fleſh. We ſee it in nature, the more ſpiritual any thing is, the more it unites; the beams of the ſun are of a kind of ſpiritual nature, therefore thouſands of them will unite *in puncto;* but it is not ſo in other things. Spiritual hearts in this are like the ſun-beams, though thouſands of them live together, they will unite in one ſo long as they continue ſpiritual. The three thouſand converts, Acts ii. joined with one accord, with one ſingle heart. We find it now by experience, ſo long as there be but a few in a church, they agree well; but uſually when they come to be numerous, diſſentions riſe amongſt them. This is an argument that the hearts of men are not ſpiritual, ſtill much fleſh remains.

You ſhall find in experience, men who ſeem to be of weak ſpirits and of ſoft tempers are very remiſs in what they do ordinarily; yet let the affections of theſe men be engaged in any cauſe, to any ſide, O how violent and impetuous will they be! They care not what they ſay or do; they will divide from God, from the public, from their deareſt friends, from their neareſt relations, from what themſelves have made profeſſion of heretofore, from their credit and profit, from their own peace, from any thing; and all to ſerve an inclination engaged in ſuch a buſineſs. It is a dangerous thing to have a man's luſt engaged; nothing can ſtand againſt an engaged luſt; a man runs on headlong, he will break his conſcience, he will deſperately endanger his eternal breaking, to maintain the engagement of his luſt.

THE

THE CAUSES OF DIVISIONS.

Pride the Leading Cauſe of Diviſions.

PRIDE is the greateſt maſter of miſ-rule in the world; it is the great incendiary in the ſoul of man, in families, in towns, cities, in all ſocieties, in church and ſtate: this wind cauſeth tempeſts to ariſe. Prov. xiii. 10. *Only by Pride cometh contention.* The Holy Ghoſt ſingles out PRIDE, as the only cauſe of all contentions, becauſe it is the chief; though there be many in a riot, the whole is uſually laid upon the ring-leaders. Pride is the ring-leader to all riots, diviſions, diſturbances amongſt us. Prov. xxi. 24. *Proud and haughty ſcorner is his name who dealeth in proud wrath.* Pride may be well indicted for the great common barrator, or wrangler, in all our towns and cities; it makes woful troubles whereſoever it comes.

We read in ſcripture of the manna that God gave his people; ſuch was the nature of it, that the heat of the ſun melted it. You will ſay, *How would it then endure the heat of the oven? for they baked it in the oven.* Yet, ſo it was, of a ſtrange kind of nature, that it could bear the heat of the oven, and not the heat of the ſun. Even of ſuch a temper are our hearts; the heat of the ſun of proſperity diſſolves us, cauſes us to run one from another; but the heat of the fire of affliction bakes us, brings us, and ſettles us together; it makes us to be one, it takes away our rawneſs, it conſumes many of our ill humours, and ſo compoſes our ſpirits into one. The ſtupidneſs of our hearts is ſuch, that we do not make our brethren's caſe our own; but we for the preſent having ſome more liberty than formerly, are lifted up, and in the pride of our hearts puſh at our brethren, and ſmite our fellow ſervants: If the troubles be at a little diſtance from us, though we even hear the cries of our brethren who are in the midſt of them, yet we fooliſhly bleſs ourſelves in our preſent caſe, enjoyments, and hopes, as if our fleſh muſt be

ſpared,

ſpared, our eſtates and enjoyments continued, yea, raiſed, whatſoever becomes of others. Oh ſinful, vain ſpirits, befooled and hardened by their pride!

But what are the ſeveral workings of pride, that make ſuch a ſtir in the world?

Anſw. A proud man thinks himſelf too great to be croſſed; Shall I bear this? I will make you know what it is to do ſuch things againſt me! He thinks it a great diſhonour to himſelf to bear any thing; therefore he muſt needs quarrel and contend, if it is but to ſhew what a man of ſpirit he is, or to ſhew that he is a man of ſuch worth, that whatever others bear, it is not fit for him to bear it. It is but reaſon that ſuch a man as he ſhould make men, who will preſume to croſs him, to yield to him, to ſtoop under him. Now when one proud man thinks it a diſhonour to him to put up with wrongs from another, who, it may be, is as proud as himſelf, and he thinks it a diſhonour for him to put up with wrongs, what peace can there be? Some wrongs muſt be put up with, but proud men will never agree who ſhall begin.

Pride makes men ſwell beyond their bounds: the way to keep all things in union is for every man to keep within his bounds: the ſwelling beyond tends to the breaking all in pieces. Hab. ii. 5. *He is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his deſire as hell, and cannot be ſatisfied.* If any humour of the body goeth beyond its bounds, it brings much trouble to it; the health and peace of the body conſiſts in the keeping of every humour within its veſſel, and due proportion.

Pride hardens men's hearts. Dan. 5. 10. *His mind is hardened in his pride.* If you would have things cleave, you muſt have them ſoft; two flints will not join; the Spaniard hath a proverb, lime and ſtone will make a wall: if one be hard, yet if the other be yielding, there may be joining, and good may be done, not elſe.

Pride cauſes men to deſpiſe the perſons, actions, and ſufferings of others; and nothing is more unſufferable to a man's ſpirit than to be vilified. A proud man deſpiſes what others do, and others what he does; every man,

next to his perſon, deſires the honour of his actions; if theſe two be contemned, his ſufferings will likewiſe be contemned by the proud: This alſo goes very near to a man; one man thinks what another man ſuffers is nothing, no matter what becomes of him; another thinks his ſufferings nothing, and no matter what becomes of him. O at what a diſtance now are men's hearts one from another!

PRIDE cauſes every man to deſire to be taken notice of, to have an eminency in ſome thing or another; if he cannot be eminent on one ſide, he will get to the other; he muſt be taken notice of, one way or other; when he is in a good and peaceable way, God makes ſome uſe of him; yet becauſe he is not obſerved and looked upon as eminent, he will rather turn to ſome other way, to contend, ſtrive, to oppoſe, or any thing, that he may be taken notice of, to be ſome body, that he may not go out of the world without ſome noiſe. *What, ſhall ſuch a man as I, of ſuch parts, ſuch approved abilities, ſo endued by God to do ſome eminent ſervice, be laid aſide, and nobody regard me? I muſt ſet upon ſome notable work, ſomething that may draw the eye of obſervance upon me!* I have read of a young man, who ſet *Diana*'s temple on fire, and being aſked the reaſon, he ſaid, "That he might have a name, that the people might talk of him." Becauſe he could not be famous for doing good, he would for doing evil. Proud ſpirits will venture the ſetting the Temple of God, yea, Church and State, on fire, that they may have a name; whatſoever they do or ſuffer to get a name, they will rather venture, than die in obſcurity: *that* above all things they cannot bear.

A proud man makes his will the rule of his actions, and would have it to be the rule of other men's too; and other men being proud, would have their wills the rule of their actions, and of his too. Thus the bluſtering wind of PRIDE in men's hearts cauſes them to joſtle one againſt another, and ſo to ſplit themſelves one upon another; as where many ſhips lie together, a violent wind breaking their anchor-cables, cauſes them

them to daſh one upon another, and ſo to make ſhipwreck even in the haven.

Proud men will venture upon things unſeemly, thinking their eſteem and greatneſs will bear them out; and others, who are proud, will venture upon the like, upon the ſame ground, for every man is ready to high thoughts of himſelf. Pſal. xix. 14. *Deliver me from preſumptuous ſins, a ſuperbis*, ſo ſome, *ab inſolentibus*, ſo others, from proud, from inſolent ſins.

If there is any thing to be done, that is conceived to be mean and low, a proud man will ſtrive to put it upon others, and others who are proud, will ſtrive to put it upon him; and if it be a work of credit, then he ſeeks it to himſelf, and others ſeek it to themſelves, and hence are jarrings and diviſions.

One proud man thinks himſelf the only worthy man to have his counſel followed, and his deſires ſatisfied; and the other, thinks himſelf the man that ſhould have his counſel followed, and his deſires ſatisfied; and thus men ſtruggle and oppoſe one another.

Here we ſee what a make-bate PRIDE is; that which *Tertullus* ſaid to *Felix*, Acts xxiv. 2. is true of humility: *by thee we enjoy great quietneſs;* but the contrary is as true of pride: "by thee are made woful diviſions, by thee we ſuffer miſerable diſturbances." Though there be no occaſion of quarrel, yet pride will make ſome; only by pride comes contention, as before, Prov. xiii. 10.

Now let every man look into his own heart, and ſee what pride hath been, and ſtill is there, and be humbled before the Lord for this. All you contentious, froward, quarrelſome people, you are charged this day from God with being men and women of proud ſpirits, and what evil there is in our ſad diviſions, that pride in your boſom is a great cauſe of it. St. *Paul did keep under his body, leſt after he had preached to others, he ſhould become a caſt-away*, or a reprobate. Let us all look to it, and eſpecially miniſters, leſt after all our profeſſion and glorious ſhews, we at laſt become reprobates, at leaſt ſuch as God may caſt out for deſtruction, even in this world, taking

ing no delight in making uſe of; what, in ſuch times as theſe to have hearts ſwoln and lifted up with pride? God is now about ſtaying the pride of the earth. How unſeaſonable and dangerous for a mariner to have his topſails up, and all ſpread in a violent ſtorm; it is time then to pull down all, leſt he ſink irrecoverably. The point of a needle will let the wind out of a bladder, and ſhall not the ſwords of God, the ſwords of war, and plague, that have got ſo deep into our bowels, let out the windy pride of our hearts? *The haughtineſs of men ſhall be bowed down, and the Lord himſelf will be exalted.* The Lord humbleth us, that he may reconcile us, not only to himſelf, but to one another.

Self-love is another dividing Diſtemper.

PHIL. ii. 3. *Let nothing be done through ſtrife:* ver. 4. *Look not every man on his own things, but every man alſo on the things of others:* This is the cauſe of ſtrife, becauſe men look ſo much on their own things. Many will have no peace except their own party be followed; *Jehu* like, *what haſt thou to do with peace? follow me.* It is not peace, but party that they mind. *Maxima pars ſtudiorum eſt ſtudium partium;* (i. e.) The greateſt part of their ſtudies is to ſtudy ſides and parties. *Luther* upon Pſ. cxxvii, hath a notable ſpeech, *I am of that opinion, ſays he, that monarchies would continue longer than they do, were it not for that ſame little* pronoun (Ego) *that ſame* (I) *myſelf.* Yea, certainly, could this ſame SELF be laid aſide, all governments and ſocieties would not only continue longer, but flouriſh better. *Self-love is the cauſe of our diviſions;* where this prevails, men love to take in all to themſelves.

Thoſe who are actuated by ſelf-love, have no common ends to join them, therefore they cannot cloſe; if they be employed in public ſervice, they quickly work to their private ends. Thus many at the firſt; Oh who but they for the public, for the common good! But there being a principle of ſelf within, and ſome difficulty riſing, they warped to their own ends,

and divided from thoſe they were employed with. Men's private ends are narrow, they cannot drive on them, but they will meet with one another, and joſtle one another, quarrel, contend, and fight for the way, as car-men do when they meet in narrow ſtreets, and boat-men in narrow paſſages. If we had public ends, our way would be broad enough, we might go on peaceably and comfortably, without prejudice againſt one another. If a man lived alone, then he might go on quietly in his own way, only God would meet him in it: but ſeeing men live in the world amongſt others, they muſt conſider, that if they will drive on their own deſigns, and work their own ends, other men have deſigns and ends to drive on and work as well as they: it is therefore impoſſible but you will croſs and be croſsed, you will vex and fret at others, and others will vex and fret at you.

When any thing doth but ſmell of SELF, it begins to be loathed; let a man have never ſuch excellent parts, do never ſuch excellent things, yet if SELF appears, the lovelineſs and glory of all is gone; therefore thoſe men that act SELF, had need be very cunning, to keep in and hide it; herein appears what a vile thing SELF is, that though in truth it acts all, and receives the incomes of all, yet it dares not appear, but lies ſkulking under all the covers it can: how vile is this SELF for which all muſt be done, which thou makeſt thy God, yet cannot in the leaſt appear, but is odious and abominable to every one! Yea, it is conſcious to itſelf, that it is ſo, and therefore dares not appear; yet the acting of it is very miſchievous to all human ſocieties.

There is this wickedneſs in SELF-LOVE, that even thoſe things that men acknowledge to be right and good in the general, yet if they ſhall not particularly ſuit with ſomething they would have, it will put men upon the oppoſing; and what peace and union can there be amongſt men, if what they will grant, and commend to be good, yet when it falls croſs to them, they will oppoſe, and contend againſt?

Self

Self cauſes men not to ſee their own evils, or if they do, to indulge themſelves in them; but to be quick-ſighted and ſevere in the diſcovering and oppoſing thoſe evils that are in others, and this cauſes many breaches and fallings out. We may apply that of the apoſtle 1 Cor. 13. *Love covereth a multitude of faults*, to ſelf-love. Selfiſh men ſee but little evil in themſelves, all is ever well with them, whatſoever others do; and the more they indulge themſelves, the more ſevere they are to others; but Chriſt would have the quite contrary, ſeverity to ourſelves, but indulgence to others; thoſe that are ſo, are the moſt peaceable men: Mat. xviii. 8. *If thy hand or foot offend thee, pluck them off, and caſt them from thee; or if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and caſt it from thee.* We muſt deal ſeverely with ourſelves, in thoſe things that are as near and as dear to us as our hands and eyes; but verſe 15. when Chriſt gives orders how we are to deal with our brethren, he then requires more moderation; *If thy brother offend thee, go and tell him his fault, between thee and him alone;* if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, and ſee what thou canſt do with him that way; yea, and after that, tell the church; not preſently cut him off, and caſt him away, as you muſt do when your hand or eye offends you. If men have any indulgence, let it be towards their brethren; if they have any ſeverity, let them exerciſe that towards themſelves. *Pliny* ſays of himſelf, *That he ſo paſſed by other men's offences, as if himſelf were the greateſt offender, and he was ſo ſevere againſt himſelf, as if he meant to pardon none.* If it were ſo with us, we ſhould live at more peace one with another than we do.

Theſe were wont to be entire friends, how came they to break off, what unkindneſs hath befallen them? None at all, only that principle of SELF was not ſo fully fed as it would be; upon that they began to be reſerved, and ſo ſtrange, and at laſt quite fell off from one another, from former love and friendſhip, and then every little thing cauſed grudgings between them.

Self ſets men's wits on work, in all cunning craftineſs,

neſs, to fetch others about to their own ends, and this goes as much againſt a man's ſpirit as any thing; when he comes to diſcern it, no man can bear to be circumvented, to be made ſerviceable only to another man's ends: The more cunning there is in it, the more odious and abominable it is to a man's ſpirit; when it comes once to be diſcerned, a man cannot bear it. Crooked windings are the goings of the ſerpent: But if a man ſhall not only ſeek to make uſe of another to ſerve his own turn by him, but after he hath done that, then to caſt him off to ſhift for himſelf; this is ſo provoking a thing, that it makes breaches irreconcileable.

When one is for SELF, in his ways, he makes another to be ſo in his; as a man, by converſing with the froward, learns to be froward; ſo many, who have heretofore had plain hearts, full of love and ſweetneſs, yet, by being acquainted much with ſelfiſh political men, learn to be ſo too. I ſee how he looks to himſelf, in every thing, fetches about this way and that way, but ſtill it terminates in ſelf at laſt; I perceived it not at my firſt acquaintance with him, and then my heart was let out to him fully; but now I ſee, every man is for himſelf, and why ſhould not I be ſo too? And what then is like to become of the public?

Surely, this ſelfiſhneſs is very vile in the eyes of God. God hath made us members of a community; the univerſe is maintained by union, therefore the creatures will venture the deſtroying themſelves in going contrary to their natures, rather than there ſhould not be union in the world; that which they do in a natural way, we ſhould do by the ſtrength of reaſon, much more by grace.

O fooliſh heart, that in ſuch a time as this art ſelfiſh, when the danger is public! as in a ſtorm, when the ſhip is in danger, if every mariner ſhould be buſy about his own cabbin, dreſſing and painting that, what infinite ſottiſh folly were it? and is it not our caſe? It were juſt with God to leave thee to thyſelf hereafter, if thou wilt look ſo much to thyſelf now. Ezek. xxii. 16. *And thou ſhalt take thine inheritance in thyſelf, in the ſight*

ſight of the heathen, and thou ſhalt know that I am the Lord. This is in a way of threat, as appears, if you compare it with ver. 14, 15. Wo to us if God leaves us to ourſelves. I have heard of a fool being left in a chamber, and the door locked, and all the people gone, he cries out of the window, *Oh myſelf, myſelf! Oh myſelf!* nothing came from him but *Oh myſelf.* Such fools have we amongſt us now; nothing but ſelf is in their thoughts, their hearts, and endeavours. The apoſtle's complaint, Phil. ii. 21. may juſtly be ours; *All ſeek their own, not the things which are Jeſus Chriſt's:* Their own things, (i. e.) ſays Chryſoſtome, their pleaſure, and their ſecurity, their temporal commodities, their profits, and their honours: ſo others: why, are not the comforts, the ſafeties, the honours of the ſaints, the things of Chriſt? doth not Chriſt own them? are they not under his protection and care?

Anſw. Yes, and he would own them more, if we owned them leſs; the more we deny them, the more hath he a care of them: we may, by our giving them up to the honour of Chriſt, make them to be among the number of his things, and then they would be precious indeed; but by deſiring them, uſing them, rejoicing in them, in reference to ourſelves, Chriſt accounts them not amongſt his things; things of a higher nature are his things, the glory of his Father, the propagation of the goſpel, the ſpiritual good of his people, and the things of eternal life, they are his things; let us make his things ours, and he will make our things his.

Envy a dividing Diſtemper.

ENVY is a ſquint-eyed fool; Job v. 2. *Envy ſlayeth the ſilly one.* James iii. 14. *If ye have bitter envying and ſtrife in your hearts.* ENVY is a bitter thing, and cauſes ſtrife, and makes that bitter too: ſo *verſe* xvi. *Where envying and ſtrife is.* Gal. v. 20. *Hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, ſtrife, ſeditions, hereſies, envyings.* 1 Cor. iii. 3. *There is among you envying, ſtrife, and diviſions.* ENVY made diviſions between angels and men,

men, it was the firſt ſin, not the firſt born of the devil, but that which turned angels into devils. The firſt heart diviſion amongſt men was between *Cain* and *Abel*, and what cauſed it but ENVY? who can ſtand before envy? She is ſubtil, underminding, dares not appear at the firſt; but if ſhe cannot be ſatisfied with her under-works, then ſhe flings, rends, frets, and fights, uſes violence, ſeeks to raiſe a contrary faction, falls on any thing in the world ſo miſchief may be done, let what will become of God's glory, of ſervice to the public, of ſaving ſouls; rather than that eſteem, reſpect and honour that otherwiſe might be had, ſhould not be obtained, all muſt come under, all muſt be ſerviceable to this baſe luſt: rather than the glory of an envious man muſt be eclipſed, God himſelf and his earth muſt be darkened. O hideous wickedneſs, and high impudence againſt the God of Heaven! ENVY divides in counſels, in inſtruments, actions, and in all proceedings; ſhe will make uſe of good to oppoſe that which is good; if ſhe cannot raiſe evil men to oppoſe good, ſhe will ſeek to get good men to oppoſe; ſhe would make God contrary to himſelf, ſhe would ſtrike at God with his own ſword. Phil. i. 14. *Some preach Chriſt out of envy.* As ENVY makes uſe of good for evil, ſo God makes uſe of this evil for good. Many ſeek to excel in preaching, or otherwiſe, by this means, and ſays St. *Paul*, *Howſoever I do rejoice, and will rejoice.* When you ſee a man ſeeking to rake and gather together all he can of any miſtakes, diſtempers, diſorders, miſcarriages, by hearſays, letters, or any way, ſo that by it he may fill up his dung-cart; and for the good, the grace or gifts of God in men, thoſe are laid aſide, or paſſed ſlightingly over, if at all mentioned, it is with ſome dirt mingled: ſurely this is an envious man, fitted for ſtrife and debate, whom God permits to be an affliction to his people, in raiſing up a ſpirit of ſtrife and contention, and cauſing diviſions amongſt them; like the kite, who paſſes over fair meadows, and pleaſant fields, not regarding them, till ſhe meets with a carrion, and then falls and ſiftens; now ſhe is upon her prey where ſhe would

be;

be: how pleaſant is it to ſome men to hear of, or find out evils in others whom they do not love? To ſay no worſe, you know it hath been an old practice, to ſeek to get any thing by reports, or any other way that might blaſt the profeſſors of religion; and how glad were they! how did it pleaſe them at the heart, if they could meet with any thing that might ſerve their turn!

The Holy Ghoſt ſays, that *Envy is rottenneſs to the bones*; this is applied, by a learned man, to ſuch as are chief in church and commonwealth, who are, as it were, the bones, the ſtrength, the ſupport of the ſocieties where they are; ENVY, ſays he, is often found among them, and it is rottenneſs to them. This vile ſin hath cauſed a rot in many men of eminent abilities and places, who might otherwiſe have done much ſervice for God, and his people, in church and ſtate: oh it is a miſchievous ſin! *Take away envy*, ſays *Auguſtine, and what you have is mine, take away envy and what I have is yours.* We read Acts xi. of *Barnabas*, that he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghoſt, and he was a man of a cleaving diſpoſition, of an uniting temper, verſe 23. *He exhorted them that with full purpoſe of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.* This man was free from envy, for the text ſays, *when he had ſeen the grace of God he was glad*; he rejoiced in, and bleſſed God for the grace he ſaw in his ſaints. *Do you envy for my ſake*, ſays *Moſes? I would to God all the people of the Lord did propheſy.* Moſes was a fit man for public ſervice, who was ſo void of ENVY; no men are ſo fit for public ſervice as thoſe who can bleſs God that he is pleaſed to make uſe of others as well as them, yea, beyond themſelves. It was a good ſpirit of that gracious, holy, old diſciple Mr. *Dod*, *I would to God*, ſaid he, *I were the worſt miniſter in England*; not wiſhing himſelf worſe than he was, but all miniſters better.

Paſſion is a dividing Diſtemper.

THOSE men who, upon every trifle, are all on fire by their PASSIONS, and what in them lies, ſet others

others on fire, do exceedingly diſturb the peace of thoſe places where they live, and thoſe ſocieties of which they are members: Their hot paſſions cauſe the climate where they live to be like the torrid zone, too hot for any to live near them. Chriſt is the prince of peace, and the devil is the prince of diviſion: hence that expreſſion of the Holy Ghoſt, Eph. is. 27. *Let not the ſun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil.* You are loath to give place to your brother, you will ſay, "what, ſhall I yield to him?" you will not yield to him, but you will yield to him that is worſe, to the devil. So you do when you yield to *wrath.*

Suppoſe children or ſervants were wrangling one with another, were not this an argument for them to be quiet, your father is here? your maſter is come? will not all be huſhed preſently? God is come amongſt us, we may ſee the face of God in what he hath done for us, and ſhall we be quarrelling before his face?

We were not without ſome fears, leſt God ſhould leave us in the work, which ſome years back was begun; but now God ſpeaks aloud to encourage us, he tells us he owns the work. Now what doth this require of us? A little logic will draw the conſequence. Hath God declared himſelf, that he intends to go on in this work he hath begun? then let us all join together to further it to the uttermoſt we can; let us not exaſperate the ſpirits of one another in ways of ſtrife and oppoſition, but let every one ſet his hand and heart to this work, that he may be able to ſay, O Lord God, thou that knoweſt the ſecrets of all hearts, knoweſt, that upon this great mercy of thine, my heart was ſo moved, that whatſoever I could poſſibly ſee to be thy will, for the fu[illegible]rance of this great work, as far as I was able, I did ſet myſelf to do it, and am reſolved to ſpend my ſtrength and life in it. If every one *did* thus, O what glory might God have from this mercy of his!

When the Lord comes to us with mercies, he expects we ſhould rejoice in them, and ſing praiſe; but how can we ſing without harmony? Prayer requires an agreement. Mat. xviii. 18. *If two of you ſhall agree on earth,*

touching

touching any thing they ſhall aſk, it ſhall be done for them. Surely praiſe requires agreement much more. Pſalms out of tune are harſh to the ear; diſagreement of heart is much more ſo to the ſpirit of God.

Surely when God hath done ſo much for us, it muſt be acknowledged to be our duty, to ſtudy what ſacrifice would be beſt pleaſing to him; ſome ſacrifice we muſt offer: If there be any more acceptable to him than other, ſurely he deſerves it. If a friend had done ſome real kindneſs for you, you would be glad to know what might be moſt grateful to him, wherein you might teſtify your thankfulneſs. Is this in your hearts? Do you now ſay, Oh that we did but know the thing that would be moſt pleaſing to God; what ſacrifice would be the ſweeteſt in his noſtrils! The Lord knows we would offer it freely, whatſoever it be. I will tell you, *That we would lay aſide our diviſions, our frowardneſs, that we would abandon all contention and ſtrife, that we would put on bowels of mercies, kindneſs, humbleneſs of mind, meekneſs, long-ſuffering, forbearing one another, forgiving one another, if any have a quarrel againſt any, even as Chriſt forgave you, even ſo do ye,* Col. iii. 12. *A meek and quiet ſpirit is, in the ſight of God, of great price,* 1 Pet. iii. 4. *The ſacrifice of God,* that which is inſtead of all ſacrifices, *is a broken ſpirit.* Our hearts have been broken one from another, in our unhappy diviſions; O that they could break one towards another, in love and tenderneſs! Here would be a ſacrifice more eſteemed of God, than thouſands of rams, and ten thouſand rivers of oil: *Loving mercy, and walking humbly,* is preferred before ſuch ſacrifices. Micah. vi. 8.

God ſhews that he can own us, notwithſtanding all our infirmities; why ſhould not we own our brethren, notwithſtanding their infirmities? Why ſhould our diviſions cauſe us to caſt off one another, ſeeing our diviſions have not provoked God to caſt us off. We had need take heed of breaches, leſt God ſhould be provoked to change his adminiſtrations towards us.

All thoſe who are of gracious and peaceable ſpirits, ſhould conſider this, and go to all they know to have

been

been at a diſtance one from another, with whom they have hope to do good, and ſeek to mollify their ſpirits, to know what it is they have one againſt another, what prejudices, what hard thoughts have been entertained by them, and ſtrive by all means they are able to remove them; that ſo, we, loving and delighting in one another, the Lord may love us, and delight in us, and ſhew mercy unto us yet more and more.

Rigidneſs a dividing Diſtemper.

RIGID, harſh, ſour, crabbed, rough-hewn ſpirits, are unfit for union; there is no ſweetneſs, no amiableneſs, no pleaſingneſs in them, they pleaſe themſelves in a rigid auſtereneſs, but are pleaſing to none elſe: in their ways, they will abate nothing of their own, nor yield any thing to others: This is againſt the rule of the apoſtle. *We muſt not pleaſe ourſelves, but let every one pleaſe his neighbour, for his good to edification; and this, according to the example of Chriſt, who pleaſed not himſelf.* This is the duty not of weak men only, who had need pleaſe others, becauſe they have need of them, but thoſe that are ſtrong, ought not to pleaſe themſelves, but ſeek to pleaſe others. Men who are of auſtere ſpirits, affecting gravity which turns to a dull, ſullen ſternneſs, they think it to be the commendation of the ſtrength of their ſpirits, that they can carry themſeves as they do towards others, ſeeking altogether content to themſelves, without any yieldableneſs to others; "no, that is but lightneſs, and weakneſs in men; they are of a more ſtaid, ſtrong temper than to do ſo." Theſe men by their wiſdom do very much ſin againſt the wiſdom of the Holy Ghoſt in the ſcripture; yea, and againſt the example of Jeſus Chriſt, who, in his whole courſe, manifeſted tenderneſs, gentleneſs, affableneſs, amiableneſs toward weak ones, who were infinitely beneath him: and here is ſet forth to us one who pleaſed not himſelf, and ſo was far from this rigid, harſh temper: thoſe ſwords are not of the beſt tempered metal which will not bend, but ſtand ſtiff, but ſuch as yield and

bend

bend with the moſt eaſe, and ſtand ſtrait again ; neither are thoſe diſpoſitions beſt, which are the ſtiffeſt ; but ſuch as are moſt flexible, and yet ſtand ſtrait too. This harſh and rigid ſpirit makes men's gifts and graces to be very unuſeful. When *Plato* ſaw *Xenocrates* of an auſtere rigid temper, he adviſed him to ſacrifice to the *graces*, that he might have more mildneſs, fearing that otherwiſe his parts and learning would be unprofitable. The Jews obſerve upon Exo. xxv. 3. That no iron was in the ſtuff of the tabernacle; rigid iron ſpirits are very unfit for church work. Levit. xvii. 7, *They ſhall no more ſacrifice to devils.* The word tranſlated devils, ſignifies rough ones ; devils had their names from thence ; this is the name of a ſatyr, Iſa. xxxiv. 14, *The rough one.* The Spirit of God is a Dove-like, ſweet ſpirit, but the ſpirit of the devil is a rough, harſh ſpirit, the ſpirit of a ſatyr. Prov. xi. 17. *He that is cruel troubleth his own fleſh.* That word here tranſlated cruel, the ſeptuagint elſewhere tranſlates by a word that ſignifies rigid, ſtiff. Men of ſuch tempers are very troubleſome to themſelves, to their families, to all with whom they converſe. If a ſmith would join two pieces of iron, he muſt firſt beat them ſmooth : If the joiner would join two pieces of wood, he muſt plain them. Except our ſpirits be beaten ſmooth, or plained, they are unfit for joining.

Raſhneſs a dividing Diſtemper.

ACTS xix. 36. *Ye ought to be quiet, and do nothing raſhly.* Doing things raſhly, is oppoſed to quietneſs.

RASHNESS makes men engage themſelves ſuddenly in buſineſs, before they have examined it well. This cauſes much trouble, for if a man be engaged, he lies under a temptation to go on in it ; as 2 Chron. xxv. 9. when the man of God came to Amaziah, to take him off from a buſineſs he was engaged in ; " O but ſays he, what ſhall I do for the hundred talents I have given

en out already ?" Thus many anſwer to the truth of God, that would take them off from what they have engaged in, " but what ſhall I do for my credit that lies engaged ?"

RASHNESS cauſes men ſuddenly to provoke others; whereas, did they conſider what ill conſequences might come of it, they would forbear. Raſh men quickly take hold of the ſword of juſtice to hack and hew; they think that what they do is according to reaſon; but they do not wiſely weigh things in the balance of juſtice. Remember, juſtice hath a balance, as well as a ſword. Prov. xxix. 11. *A fool uttereth all his mind.* The ſeptuagint has it, *utters all his anger.* Raſh fools, by uttering all their anger, ſuddenly cauſe great ſtir and trouble wherever they go. The Hebrew word that ſignifies a fool, and that which ſignifies ſuddenly, raſhly, is from the ſame root.

When peace ſometimes is even concluded, and there is great joy, in hopes of a comfortable agreement, raſhneſs will ſuddenly break it, without any due conſideration.

O that that promiſe, Iſa. lii. 4. were fulfilled among us, *the heart of the raſh ſhall underſtand knowledge.* Raſh men preſently think they underſtand all that can be known in ſuch a buſineſs, and thence preſume to make ſudden determinations; but, as over-hearty digeſtion cauſes wind, and brings much trouble to the body; ſo do over-haſty reſolutions to men's ſpirits, and ſocieties.

Wilfulneſs a dividing Diſtemper.

I Think I may ſay, in moſt men, WILL is the axle-tree, luſts and paſſions are the wheels, whereupon almoſt all their actions are carried: where there is much WILL, though the thing be little about which men contend, yet the oppoſition may be great; as a little ſtone, thrown with a ſtrong arm, may make deep impreſſion. It is a dangerous thing to have men's wills engaged in matters of difference: it is eaſier to deal with twenty men's reaſons, than with one man's WILL:

a man

a man of a wilful ſtout ſpirit, ſtands as a ſtake in the midſt of a ſtream, lets all paſs by him, but he ſtands where he was: what hope can there be of union, where there will be no yielding? One man's will raiſes another's; ſet WILL to WILL, they may daſh one againſt another, but are not like to cloſe, to get into one another. A wilful man thinks it beneath a wiſe man to alter his way; yea, it may be, he thinks it a diſhonour to the truth, that both he, his profeſſion, and the honour of God ſhall ſuffer by it; when a ſtubborn ſelf-willedneſs is taken for a right conſtancy and ſettledneſs, it is very ſtrong in men; but let us take heed of this, it is no matter though we go back from our former aſſertions, ſo long as we go forward to the truth. Luther was called an apoſtate; I am ſo, ſays he, but it is from error to truth. Many times, ſtoutneſs of ſpirit comes from weakneſs, rather than ſtrength; there is not always the greateſt ſtrength of judgment, where there is the greateſt ſtrength of will: As a man's judgment that is without prejudice is very ſtrong, ſo a man's prejudice that is without judgment is as ſtrong: The dulleſt horſes are not always the moſt eaſily reined. *I know, and am perſuaded*, ſays the apoſtle, Rom. xiv. 14. Many men are perſuaded before they know; thoſe who are perſuaded before they know, will not be perſuaded to know. Men's WILLS will not ſuffer their underſtandings to conſider; if they do conſider, they will not ſuffer them to be convinced; if they be convinced, they will not ſuffer them to acknowledge that they are convinced.

Unconſtancy a dividing Diſtemper.

UNCONSTANCY is evil, and a cauſe of diviſion: *Stoutneſs* is evil, and a cauſe of diviſion: a man muſt not be one thing one day, and another another day; not like a weather-cock, carried up and down with every wind; neither muſt he be wilful and ſtout, not like a ruſty lock that will not be ſtirred by any key. 1ſt. True conſtancy and ſettledneſs of ſpirit, is got by much prayer and humiliation before the Lord; *(eſtabliſh*

me Lord with thy free ſpirit, unite my heart to fear thy name) after thy heart-breakings and meltings, and heart-cryings and pourings forth, *Lord, ſhew me what thy will is in this thing, keep me from miſcarrying, let me not ſettle upon any error inſtead of the truth, but what is thy truth, faſten my ſoul in it, that whatever temptations come, I may never be taken off from it.* Tell God in prayer what the thing is, and what hath perſuaded thy heart to embrace it, open thy heart fully to God in all thy aims; and if by this means, the heart be fixed, now it is delivered from ficklenefs, and not fallen into ſtoutneſs. 2ndly. Where true conſtancy is attained by the ſpirit of God, and not by the ſtoutneſs of thine own, there is exerciſe of much grace, and growing up in grace, as faith, humility, love, meekneſs, patience, &c. 2 Pet. iii. 17, 18. Take heed *ye fall not from your ſtedfaſtneſs, but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.* Hearts ſtout and wilful are dry and ſapleſs. If the more a man hath to do with God, the more ſettled he is in his way; and when he hath the moſt full converſe and ſweetneſs of communion with God, he is then the moſt fully ſettled, ſatisfied, eſtabliſhed in ſuch a truth, which he conceived to be of God; he is ſafe. Many men are very ſtiff, and wilfully immoveable; when they have to deal with men, they ſeem then to be the moſt confident men in the world; but God knows, and their conſcience knows, when they ſolemnly ſet themſelves in the preſence of God, and have the moſt real ſight of God, and have to deal moſt immediately with him, then they have miſ-giving thoughts, they have fears that things may not prove ſo ſure, as they bore others in hand they apprehended them to be: but if God's preſence, and thy dealings with him, confirms thee in this, thy conſcience may give thee an aſſurance, that as thou art not fickle and wavering, ſo not ſtout and wilful.

3dly. When there is a proportion in men's conſtancy: if a man be reſolute and conſtant in one thing, but very fickle and eaſy turned aſide in others, there is cauſe to ſuſpect his conſtancy is rather from ſtiffneſs than from grace; for grace works proportionably through

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the whole ſoul, and in the whole courſe of a man's life. 4thly. If the more real the preſence of death and judgment appear to a man, the more ſettled he is in that way; this likewiſe may be a good evidence to him, that his ſettledneſs in ſuch a way is right.

A Spirit of Jealouſy a dividing Diſtemper.

ENVY, *ſtrife, railings, evil ſurmiſings*, 1 Tim. vi. 4. Strife, and evil ſurmiſings, are near of kin. If contentious men can get nothing againſt their brethren, they will ſurmiſe there is ſomething; if they can find nothing in their actions to judge, they will judge their hearts; if there be nothing above-board, they will think there may be ſomething under-board; and from thinking there may be ſomething, they will think it very likely there is ſomething; and from likely there is, they will conclude there is, *ſurely there is ſome plot working*. But this is againſt the law of love, for *it thinketh no evil*; all the good that they ſee in their brethren, is blaſted by their *ſuſpicion* of evil. Love would teach us rather by what appears, to judge the beſt of what appears not, than by what appears not, to judge the worſt of what appears.

A Spirit of Contention a dividing Diſtemper.

AS in ſome there is a ſtrong inclination, a vehement *impetus* to whoredom, which the prophet calls the ſpirit of whoredom; ſo there is in others a vehement, ſtrong diſpoſition of heart to *contention*; theſe have a *ſpirit of contention*; theſe are like *ſalamanders*, who love, and live in the fire. They thirſt after the waters of *Maſſah* and *Meribah*; their temper is ſuch, as if they drank no other drink than what was brewed of thoſe waters, *contentions* and *ſtrifes*; ſo, what are as tedious to other men as death, are their delight; they are moſt in their element, when they are over head and ears in them. A *contentious ſpirit* will always find matter for contention. Prov. xxvi. 21. *As coals to burning*

ing coals, and wood to fire, ſo is a contentious man to kindle ſtrife: they are ready to put their hands to any ſtrife they meet with: yet, Prov. xxvi. 17. *He that meddleth with ſtrife belonging not to him, is like one that holdeth a dog by the ears.* Many men have no mettle in any thing but contentions; like many jades who are dull in travel, they have mettle only to kick and to play jadiſh tricks. If thou haſt any ſpirit, any zeal, and courage, it is a pity it ſhould be laid out in quarrels; reſerve it for the cauſe of God, to ſtrengthen thee in contending for the truth, and the public good.

Aſſociating with Whiſperers, a dividing Practice.

MANY men of moderate ſpirits, if let alone, yet meeting with men who tell them ſtories, and ſpeak ill of thoſe men that heretofore they had a good opinion of; now before they have examined what the truth is, there is a venom got in their ſpirits before they are aware, their hearts begin to be hot, and to riſe againſt thoſe men they hear ſuch things of, their thoughts are altered concerning them, their ſpirits alienated, breaches are made, and men who are innocent wonder from whence all come. O take heed of theſe men of evil tongues. Saint *Auguſtine* could not endure ſuch gueſts at his table; he cauſed therefore theſe two verſes to be writ over his table; it were well they were over ſome of yours:

To ſpeak ill of the abſent forbear,
Or do not ſit at table here.

Needleſs Diſputes a dividing Practice.

WHEN men have got a little knowledge, they think it is a fine thing to be arguing and diſputing in matters of religion: unneceſſary diſputes are their neceſſary practice, for otherwiſe they ſhall be accounted as nobody, if they have not ſomething to object againſt almoſt every thing; but in this way of theirs they ſhall be accounted knowing men, men who have an inſight into

into things, who underſtand more than ordinary men do: hence they turn all their religion into *diſputes*, and by them they grow giddy. Wine is good when it goes to the heart to cheer it, but when it fumes all up into the head, it makes it giddy. Knowledge is good when the ſtrength of it gets to the heart to comfort it, there to breed good ſpirits, for the ſtrengthening it in the ways of holineſs; but when it flies up all into the head, it fills it with thouſands of fancies; it cauſes pride and giddineſs. *Diſputes* draw the beſt ſpirits from the heart, by which they weaken it. It is a very ill ſign in a man to have a contradicting ſpirit, to get into a vein of diſputing againſt any thing, though it be good. I have read of *Gregory Nazianzen*, that he told his friends that *Julian* would prove to be a notorious wicked man; he gave his reaſon, becauſe he took ſuch delight in diſputing againſt that which was good. Diſputes are ſeldom without much heart-diſtemper. If they continue long, they cauſe ſnarling one at another; and no marvel though thoſe who ſnarl ſo often, do bite at laſt. A man ſhews moſt parts in the *matter* of truth, but moſt grace in the *manner* of handling it with reverence, holineſs and modeſty. Rom. xiv. 1. *Receive not the weak in faith to doubtful diſputations.* Here is a direct injunction againſt thoſe diſputes I am ſpeaking of. Let no man ſay every truth is precious, the leaſt truth is more worth than our lives, we muſt contend for every truth. The leaſt truth is ſo precious, that we muſt rather loſe our lives than deny it. You muſt do and ſuffer much to maintain truth, but this in an orderly way.

Firſt, you muſt be grounded in the main fundamentals of religion; you muſt be ſtrong in the faith, and after that labour to edify yourſelves in all the truths of God, ſo as one may be helpful to another. It is not for every one, who hath but little time, little knowledge, little means, little ſtrength, to tire out himſelf and others in doubtful diſputes. The ſcripture is ſo much againſt this, as nothing can be more. 1 Tim. i. 4. *Which miniſter queſtions rather than edifying.* To aſk

and diſcourſe of queſtions about the great things that concern thy ſoul, thy eternal ſtate, how thou mayſt live further to the honour of God, is good, when you meet together; to confer one with another, what God hath done for your ſouls, to tell each other the experiences of your own hearts, and God's dealings with you; what temptations ye meet with, and how God helps you againſt them; ſuch things as theſe would edify. But when your queſtions are about things you are never like to underſtand, and if you did underſtand, they little concern you, they would not be helpful to you one whit in the ways of godlineſs; theſe the Holy Ghoſt would not have you ſpend your time in. Eccles. vii. 29. *Man was made upright, and he hath found out to himſelf many inventions.* "Miſcuerit ſe infinitis queſtionibus." So the old Latin reads it, He hath mingled himſelf in infinite queſtions. If we had but that great queſtion more amongſt us, What ſhall we do to be ſaved? it would cauſe many unprofitable queſtions to vaniſh. Never ſuch ignorance came upon the Chriſtian world, as in that age when the ſchoolmen were in the higheſt eſteem; all religion then was turned into queſtions, both the myſtery and the power of godlineſs was loſt. The things of religion are rather to be believed than diſputed.

We believe fiſhermen, not logicians, ſays *Ambroſe*. The devil at this day ſeeks to darken the glory of religion this way; he ſees ſo much light hath broke forth, that he cannot get men preſently off it by profaneneſs, therefore he labours to eat out the ſtrength of it, by buſying them, and getting them to delight in multitudes of queſtions, and that about things of leſſer concernment. 1 Tim. vi. 4. *He is proud and knoweth nothing, but doating about queſtions, and ſtrifes of words, whereof cometh envy, ſtrife, railings, evil ſurmiſings, perverſe diſputings of men of corrupt minds, and deſtitute of the truth.* Theſe men conceit they have more knowledge than other men, but the Holy Ghoſt ſaith they know nothing; they cry out much of the truth, and they contend for the truth, but the Holy Ghoſt ſaith they are

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deſtitute of the truth. 2 Tim. ii. 22, 23. Follow charity, peace, but fooliſh and unlearned queſtions avoid, knowing that they do gender ſtrifes, but the ſervant of the Lord muſt not ſtrive. And Titus. iii. 8. 9. This is a faithful ſaying, theſe things I will that thou affirm conſtantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works; theſe things are good and profitable unto men, but avoid fooliſh queſtions and genealogies, and contentions and ſtrivings about the law, for they are unprofitable and vain.

The queſtion about the law, whether a man be juſtified by it, or by free grace in Chriſt, is not one of thoſe fooliſh queſtions and needleſs ſtrivings, this is a great queſtion, this we are to contend for, our life is in it: but there are other queſtions about the law, which cauſe ſtriving, rather than edifying. Let thoſe two things be granted about the law; firſt that we are not juſtified by it, but by the free grace of God in Chriſt: Secondly, that what duties of holineſs are ſet down in the law, we are bound to them by the moſt ſtrong obligations: what need we contend further about the law? Let us be eſtabliſhed in theſe two, and it will be ſufficient for our edifying. It is like, when *Paul* wrote this epiſtle to *Titus*, the heads of the people were troubled about ſome ſuch kind of queſtions about the law, as are amongſt us; therefore, ſays he, *avoid fooliſh queſtions, and ſtrivings about the law.* But now the queſtions about the law are driven on to ſuch a dangerous iſſue, that we have cauſe not only to be careful to avoid them, but even to tremble at the thought of them. It is now accounted a legal thing againſt the grace of the goſpel, to confeſs ſin, to be humbled for ſin, to make conſcience of duty, or to be troubled in conſcience for neglect of it; no, they thank God they are delivered from ſuch things; in reſpect of God, whether they ſin or not, it is all one: yea, theſe things prevail with thoſe who have been forward in a profeſſion of religion, who ſeemed to walk ſtrictly, but now are grown looſe. That faith is eaſily wrought, which teacheth men to believe well of themſelves, though their lives be ill. There is a mighty

ty change in men's ſpirits now from that which was heretofore; times have been when any opinion that tended to looſeneſs, was preſently diſguſtful and unſavoury, and rejected by ſuch who made profeſſion of religion.

Slaiden, in the tenth book of his commentaries, ſays the devil that fought to do miſchief at *Munſter*, was not a ſkilful devil, but rude and ſimple, becauſe he fought to prevail by tempting men to looſeneſs; whereas, ſays he, if he had been a cunning devil, he would rather have deceived by abſtaining from fleſh, by abhorring matrimony, by ſhews of wonderful lowlineſs of mind, &c. He might ſooner have taken men this way. But truly now the moſt cunning devil ſees it to be the beſt way to attain his ends, to raiſe up and foment opinions that tend to the liberty of the fleſh, ſo that by it he can carry them on under the colour of magnifying free grace; he finds that theſe things are exceeding ſuitable to men's ſpirits in theſe times, that they are taken in by ſuch who formerly appeared ſo conſcientious, that he feared he ſhould never have been able to have prevailed with them. He never found a way like to this, to prevail with ſuch men; yea, never a way like to this to choak the word, when it firſt begins to work upon the heart. He hath blaſted more young converts this way, than ever he did by any way ſince he was a devil: heretofore the way was to ſtir up others to deride them for following the word, and for praying; now he hath a way worth two of that, to make them to deride others for their conſcientiouſneſs in following the word and praying, and this ſtrengthened with a high perſuaſion that hereby they are the great magnifiers of the free grace of God in the goſpel, the only men who underſtand the goſpel way. This devil now looks upon himſelf and his fellows as ſimple and fooliſh in all their former devices. Here is an experiment beyond them all, ſeeing this Chriſt muſt needs be magnified, he will magnify him too; ſeeing the goſpel muſt go on, he will put it on too, he will find out a device here, to ſtrike at the practice, power, and life of godlineſs,

lineſs, in a more ſecret and prevailing way, than ever formerly was done. It is like in this generation the former principles of godlineſs will not be got out; but if this way prevails ſtill in proportion to what it hath done, in a generation or two it is like to bring general profaneneſs and licentiouſneſs upon the face of the Chriſtian world more than any way of ſatan ever ſince the world began; for here is a way to be looſe and profane, and to ſatisfy conſcience too.

Men not keeping within the bounds that God hath ſet them, a dividing practice.

FIRST then, when men will be meddling with that which concerns them not, that is out of their ſphere. 1 Theſ. iv. 11. *Study to be quiet, and do your own buſineſs.* Prov. xx. 31. *It is an honour for a man to ceaſe from ſtrife, but every fool will be meddling.* When *manna* was gathered, and kept in that proportion God would have it, it was very good; but when men muſt have more, and keep it longer than God would have them, then it bred worms. Thus it will be in all that we have, or do. Let us keep our proportion God ſets us, and all will be well; but if we think to provide better for ourſelves by going beyond our meaſure, worms are preſently bred in all.

Peter Martyr, in an epiſtle to the miniſters, and ſuch as profeſſed the faith in *Polonia*, exhorts them to endeavour the eſtabliſhing of diſcipline in the church as ſoon as they could, while people's hearts were heated with love to, and deſires after the goſpel. He tells them it will be harder to bring it in afterwards, when their hearts begin to grow more cold; and that they might not think diſcipline a ſmall thing, he ſays, that thoſe churches cannot be ſaid to profeſs the goſpel truly, nor ſolidly, which want it. He would have them acknowledge it not to be the leaſt part of the chriſtian religion, but muſt know that the goſpel is neglected by ſuch as ſhall put off from themſelves ſuch a ſingular, excellent portion of it. But, ſays he, this will be the objection,

under

under the colour of diſcipline, the miniſters will tyrannize, they will carry things according to their minds.

Propagating evil reports, a dividing Practice.

THIS may be done you know otherwiſe than by the tongue; and this hath been an old dividing way: if we can blaſt the chief of a party, we ſhall do well enough with the reſt, wherefore let us make as ill interpretations of what they do as we poſſibly can; let us faſten as ill things upon them as we can have any colour or pretence for; let reports be raiſed, fomented and ſpread, whether they be true or no, it makes no matter, ſomething will ſtick. Jer. ii. 10. *Report, ſay they, and we will report it;* do but raiſe a report, let us be able to ſay we heard it, or there was a letter writ about ſuch a thing, and we will boldly aſſert it; the apprehenſion of it will prevail with many; however, theſe men ſhall not have that eſteem in their hearts, as generally as heretofore they have had, and if we once get down their eſteem, we ſhall do well enough with their cauſe; if we can meet with any bold ſpirit that will venture to encounter with them in this, that will dare to take upon him to gather up, or make, or aggravate, or wreſt reports, or do any thing that may render them otherwiſe in the thoughts, and hearts of men than hitherto they have been, we ſhall break them; it is but one or two venturing the hard thoughts of men to make an experiment, ſome may be found fit for ſuch a buſineſs, we will find out ways to encourage them; if their hearts begin to fail, we will apply warm cloths to them, we will one way or other ſupport them; this muſt be done, or elſe whatſoever we do will be to no purpoſe; ſomething or other muſt be found to ſerve our ends in this. Doth *Moſes* prevail too much in the hearts of the people? Something muſt be found againſt him; if we can find nothing againſt himſelf, yet we will find ſomething againſt his wife, *She is an Ethiopian woman.* Num. xii. 1. And yet, who was ſhe but the daughter of *Jethro*, to whom he

he had been married many years before? for an Ethiopian and a Midianitiſh woman are all one. But now we are reſolved to pick out whatever we can get information of, though it be in things done many years ſince, when they lived in ſuch or ſuch places, in times of old; it will ſerve our turn, we may faſten it upon them. Prov. xvi. 27. *An ungodly man diggeth up evil, and in his lips there is a burning fire:* if he hath nothing above ground, he will dig ſomething up, though it be, both what by God and man hath been buried long ſince. *David* was a public inſtrument of God for much good, yet, Pſ. xxxi. 11. *He was a reproach amongſt his enemies, but eſpecially amongſt his neighbours. Nehemiah* raiſed by God for great ſervice, what dirt was caſt upon him? he was accuſed of ſedition and rebellion. *Paul* a peſtilent fellow, he and his company with him turned the world upſide down; what evil can be deviſed, but was faſtened upon the chriſtians in the primitive times? They charge them as being the cauſe of all their miſery; if they have ill weather, if the rivers overflow, if *Nilus* does not flow, if there be an earthquake, plague, famine, hale the chriſtians to the lions: at their meetings they ſaid they made *Thyeſtes* ſuppers, who invited his brother to a ſupper, and preſented him a diſh of his own fleſh, a limb of his ſon: many ſuch abominable things were faſtened upon them, as are not fit to be named. *Tertullian* tells the chriſtians, that they were *funambulones*, like men upon a rope, if they went one ſtep awry, they were in danger to be undone by it, ſo narrowly did their enemies watch them; and ſo maliciouſly did they aggravate all their miſcarriages: thus the moſt eminent after his time, as *Athanaſius*, he was as miſerably aſperſed as ever poor man in this world by the *Arian* party; they rendered him moſt odious to his friends, and ſtrangers. In the beginning of the reformation, the *Waldenſes* were ſo aſperſed, that the ſtory ſays of them, there was not one arrow in the quiver of malice, but it was drawn forth and ſhot at them. *Luther*, *Calvin*, *Beza*, *Oecolampadius*, *Bullinger*, and the reſt, are by ſome in writing rendered the moſt black

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and vile pieces that the earth bore, both in their lives and deaths. I find it recorded by *Zuinglius*, that he was a man ſo eminent, that his friends made him almoſt a God; and ſo traduced by his enemies, that one would wonder the earth did not open, and ſwallow up ſuch a man.

As for the ſervants of God, they commit their names and ways to God, knowing that the Lord takes care of their names as well as their ſouls. If dirt be caſt upon a mud-wall it ſticks, but if upon marble, it ſoon waſhes or moulders away. God will in time juſtify his ſervants, even in your conſciences, by the conſtancy of their peaceable carriage towards men, and their gracious, holy walking with their God; only take you heed, that you involve not yourſelves in the guilt of that wrong that is done unto them, by the readineſs of your ſpirits to cloſe with, and take content in what evil you hear of thoſe whom God accounts faithful.

An inordinate cleaving to ſome, ſo as denying due reſpect to others, a dividing Practice.

THIS was the practice amongſt the *Corinthians*, which cauſed great diviſions amongſt them. Some were of *Paul*, ſome of *Apollos*, ſome of *Cephas*. No queſtion a man may in his heart more reverence and prize, and outwardly ſhew more reſpect to thoſe whom God makes the greateſt inſtruments of good (cæteris paribus) than to others. *David* ſhewed more reſpect to *Nathan* than to *Gad*: *Nathan* was by far more intimate with him: the intimacy was ſuch between them, that *Nathan* thought it a very ſtrange thing that *David* ſhould do any thing about the diſpoſing of his crown, and not make him acquainted with it. So *Valentinian* the emperor honoured *Ambroſe* above any of the biſhops in his time. Such men as God is not pleaſed to make ſo inſtrumental for good as others, ſhould not envy this; let them be willing that thoſe ſhould be honoured whom God honours: but yet people ſhould take heed that they give not ſo much honour to one

that

that they deny due reſpect to others; and miniſters, and others in public places ſhould not entertain, much leſs ſeek for, or rejoice in any honour or reſpect given to them, which they ſee detracts from that eſteem and countenance that is due to others. The weakneſs and folly of people in their inordinate giving, or denying reſpect, is often cauſed, but more ordinarily fomented, and increaſed, by the pride and vanity of teachers, in ſeeking for, or at leaſt in a pleaſing embracing ſuch inordinate reſpect given to them, whereby others ſuffer much; ſiding of parties is made, and more hurt comes to the public, than their honours are worth, a thouſand times over. This evil many times comes of it, that reaſon and truth from one man is little regarded, and error and weakneſs from another man is greedily embraced, and ſtiffly maintained; whereas it ſhould be with reaſon and truth, as it is with money, one man's money in a market is as good as another's; ſo ſhould one man's reaſon and truth, ſpoken by him, be as good as another's.

Becauſe men cannot join in all things with others, they will join in nothing, a dividing Practice.

SOME men are of ſuch dividing diſpoſitions, that if they be offended with a man in any one thing, in hearing, or otherwiſe, they will go away in a touchy mood, reſolving never to hear him more. You think you have liberty in any froward mood to caſt off that means of good which God offers to you, to refuſe to partake of ſuch men's gifts and graces as you pleaſe; it may be, your ſtomach is ſo high and great on a ſudden, or your ſpirit is fallen into ſuch a ſullen humour, that you will not ſo much as go or ſend to him, to ſee, if upon a ſerious and quiet examination of things, you may not have ſatisfaction in what for the preſent offends. No men's ſpirits are carried on with ſuch preſent, raſh, heady reſolutions. I believe, there was never ſuch a kind of ſpirit prevailing amongſt ſuch as profeſs godlineſs, ſince the chriſtian religion was in the world; never did ſo

many withdraw from hearing, even thoſe by whom they acknowledge God hath ſpoken to their hearts, and that before they have gone to them, to impart what it is that ſcruples them, to try whether they may not get ſome ſatisfaction; certainly, if you have no need of the word, the word hath no need of you: you may eaſily expreſs your diſcontents one to another; you may eaſily ſay you are reſolved you will never hear ſuch an one any more, but you cannot ſo eaſily anſwer this to Jeſus Chriſt. When your weakneſſes, the prevailing of your diſtempers, ſhall grate upon your conſciences, this will be a great aggravation of the evil of them, you neglected in a humorſome way, and ſelf-willed reſolution, thoſe means that might have done your ſoul good, even ſuch as many hundreds, if not thouſands of ſouls bleſs God for, all the days of their lives, yea, are now bleſſing God in heaven for: heretofore you would have been glad of that, which now you ſlight and reject; this is not from more light or ſtrength that you have now, which you had not then, but from more vanity.

To commend and countenance what we care not for, in oppoſition to what we diſlike, a dividing Practice.

WHEN ſuch as profeſs godlineſs ſhall make much of wicked men, ſhall commend them, join with them, embrace them, yea, be well pleaſed with the bitterneſs, boiſterouſneſs, and boldneſs of their daring ſpirits, becauſe, there may be uſe made of them, againſt thoſe men and ways they differ from; this is an evil which brings guilt upon themſelves, and makes the diviſion between them and their brethren very great. If your hearts be right, and your cauſe be good, you need not make uſe of any thing that is evil, to comfort your hearts, or to maintain your cauſe: the Lord will not be beholden to the evil, the bitterneſs of men's ſpirits, for the furtherance of his cauſe; and why ſhould you? God will not take the wicked by the hand, neither

ther ſhouldeſt thou: why do you ſeek to ſtrengthen yourſelves by ſtirring up vile men to join with you; ſuch as heretofore your hearts were oppoſite to: how comes it to paſs, you can cloſe ſo lovingly now? You can ſmile one upon another, and ſhake hands together: how comes it to paſs, you do rejoice the hearts of evil men; they encourage you, and you encourage them? thoſe unſavoury, bitter expreſſions that come from them, you can ſmile at and be well pleaſed with, becauſe they are againſt ſuch as differ from you; blow up that ſparkle of ingenuity that heretofore hath been in you; lay your hands upon your hearts, bethink yourſelves, is it the ſpirit of Jeſus Chriſt that actuates us in ſuch a way wherein we are? Surely this is not the way of peace, but of diviſion and confuſion.

Revenge a dividing Practice.

WHEN any provoke you, you ſay you will be even with him: there is a way whereby you may be not even with him, but above him; that is, forgive him. Practiſing revenge is the way to continue diviſions to the end of the world. Such offend me, therefore I will offend them; and therefore they offend me again, and I them, and ſo it may run *in infinitum*. They deny me a kindneſs, therefore I will deny them, and therefore they will deny me; ſo theſe unkindneſſes run on endleſsly; diviſions will have a line of ſucceſſion. Where will it, where can it ſtop, if this be the way of men?

A gentleman of very good credit, who lived at court many years, told me, that himſelf once heard a great man in the kingdom ſay, he never forgave a man in his life: and I am moved the rather to believe it to be ſo, becauſe I have been told by ſome other gentlemen, that the ſame man would, when he was walking alone, ſpeak to himſelf, and clap his hands upon his breaſt, and ſwear by the name of God, that *he would be revenged, he would be revenged*; and that he who lay in his

his boſom, was wont to ſit alone, and ſing to herſelf, *Revenge, Revenge, O how ſweet is revenge!*

THE EVILS OF DIVISIONS.

WHAT heart that hath any tenderneſs in it bleeds not in the ſenſe of theſe ſore and dreadful heart diviſions there are amongſt us? The evil there is in them is beyond what tongue or pen can expreſs; take a view of it under theſe three heads. 1ſt. The good they hinder. 2d. The ſin they cauſe. 3d. The miſery they bring.

Firſt. The quiet, comfort, and ſweetneſs of our ſpirits is hindered by diviſions.

THEY put the ſpirit out of tune; men who have heretofore had ſweet ſpirits full of ingenuity, ſince they have intereſted themſelves in theſe diviſions, have loſt their ſweetneſs, their ingenuity is gone. When the bee ſtings, ſhe leaves her ſting behind her, and never gathers honey more; men by ſtinging one another, do not loſe their ſtings, but they loſe their honey, they are never like to have that ſweetneſs in their hearts that heret ofore they had. Shall I loſe my ſweetneſs, ſays the fig-tree, and go to be promoted over the trees? Why doſt thou not reaſon thus with thy ſpirit? Shall I loſe my ſweetneſs in contending to get my will, to be above others? God forbid! There was a time that both myſelf and others found much ſweetneſs in the temper of our ſpirit; there was nothing but peaceableneſs, quiet, calmneſs, contentedneſs in it; and how comfortable was ſuch a temper of ſpirit! Methought, when my ſpirit was in that ſweet frame, all things were ſweet to me; but ſince I have been intereſted in quarrels and contentions, it hath been far otherwiſe. Prov. xv. 4. Perverſeneſs in the tongue cauſes a breach in the ſpirit. Contentions cauſe much perverſeneſs in men's tongues, and this

this cauſes a breach in their ſpirits. Your contending coſts you dear: Though it were in nothing elſe, yet the loſs of this ſweetneſs of ſpirit makes it very coſtly to you. All the wrong that you ſhould have put up if you had not contended, had not been ſo great an evil to you, as this one thing is; there is nothing more contrary to ingenuity than quarrelſomeneſs. It is reported of *Melancthon*, that when he was to die he had this ſpeech, and *Strigelius* at his death had the ſame; *I deſire to depart this life for two cauſes; firſt, that I may enjoy the deſired ſight of the Son of God, and the church in heaven. Secondly, that I may be delivered from the fierce and implacable hatred of divines.* There was much diſputing, contending, quarrelling in thoſe times, which was ſo tedious to the ſpirits of thoſe good men, as it made them the willinger to die, that they might be where their ſouls ſhould be at reſt. That ſaint of God old Mr. *Dod*, never loved to meddle with controverſies, he gave that reaſon, he found his heart the worſe when he did. Men ſeldom come away from hot diſputes, or any other contentions, but their ſpirits are altered for the worſe. They find it ſo, and others find it in them: if a man has been abroad, and met with company, with whom he hath been contending, his wife, children, ſervants, find that he comes not home with the ſame ſpirit that he went out with.

Secondly. They hinder the freedom of a man's ſpirit, which a wiſe man ſets a high price upon.

THE ſtrength of many men's ſpirits is ſpent in contentions; they have no command of them in any thing elſe. When a man is once engaged in a conteſt, he knows not how to get off; contention is a great ſnare to a man, he wiſhes he had never meddled with it; he is weary of it, but knows not how to come off fairly. We read of *Moſes*, Deut. xxxiv. 7. that he was an hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. Some give this to be one reaſon of ſuch a wonderful

preſervation of his health and ſtrength, the meekneſs of his ſpirit. God witneſſes of him, Numb. xii. 3. that he was the meekeſt man upon the face of the earth.

Thirdly. They hinder the ſweetneſs of Chriſtian converſe and communion.

YOU know your communion with the ſaints was wont to be far more ſweet than now it is; ye were wont to have your hearts ſpring at the ſight of one another: *Ipſe aſpectus boni viri delectat*, ſays *Seneca*. The very ſight of a good man delights: the ſight of a godly man was wont to delight us otherwiſe than now it does: you look one upon another now ſourly, with lowering countenance, and withdraw from one another: your comforts were wont to be double, treble, ſevenfold, an hundred fold, according to that ſociety of ſaints you converſed withal; one godly man accounted it the joy of his heart, that he had any thing that he could communicate to another godly man, and the other had the like joy that he had any thing to communicate to him; thus comforts were multiplied; but now your comforts are ſingle. Oh the ſweetneſs, the ſuitableneſs there were wont to be in the ſpirits of Chriſtians! Shall I ſay ſuitableneſs? It was bleſſed oneneſs of heart: they did as it were exchange ſouls one with another every day; their ſouls did cloſe claſp one with, and cleave one to another. Oh how did they love to open their hearts one to another! What delight was there in pouring forth their ſpirits into one another! What chearfulneſs was there wont to be in their meeting! They eat their bread together with ſingleneſs of heart and joy, praiſing the Lord. There were no ſuch chearful meetings in the world, as the meetings of the ſaints were wont to be; they parted one from another with their ſouls bound up one in another; their hearts warmed, enlarged, reſolved, ſtrengthened in God's ways. But now they cannot meet together but they fall a jarring, contending

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one with another, and part with ſpirits eſtranged from, ſoured, and embittered one againſt another: their hearts weakened, and more unſettled in the things of God than before. Heretofore when they were abſent one from another, yet the remembrance one of another was joyful; but theſe days ſeem to be gone. Where is there that opening of ſecrets one to another as formerly? Every one is afraid of another. What ſweet viſits were there wont to be! What bearing one another's burdens! What heart-encouraging letters! It was with the ſaints as in *Tertullian*'s time, Chriſtians called one another brethren, and were ready to die for one another; but now theſe are oppoſed to one another's ſpirits, they bring evil upon one another.

Fourthly. They hinder our Time.

ABUNDANCE of time is ſpent about our diviſions, which we are not able to give account to God for. When men are engaged in contentions, they will follow them night and day, whatſoever buſineſs be neglected, to be ſure that muſt not: yea, the choice of our time, that was wont to be ſpent in meditation, reading, prayer, is now ſpent in contending and wrangling: thoſe retired times that we were wont to converſe with God in, are now ſpent in the workings of our own thoughts about diviſions; and when we come abroad, then, a great part of our time is given up in going, firſt to this body, and then to the other, to help forward, and foment matter of diviſion. Of all the time of a man's life, that time that is ſpent in lawing and quarrelling is the worſt; and happy it were for many, that it might not be reckoned amongſt the days, weeks, or months of their lives.

Fifthly. They hinder our Prayers.

IF two or three agree together touching any thing they ſhall aſk, it ſhall be done for them of my Father, ſays Chriſt. Matt. xviii. 19. 1 Tim. ii. 8. *I will that men pray, lifting*

ing up their hands without wrath. When *Daniel* was in a ſtrait, he goes to his companions, and deſires them to lift up prayers to God for him. Dan. ii. 17. There was a ſweet agreement between them; hence their ſtock and trade in prayer one with another. 1 Pet. iii. 7. The apoſtle giving rules for a peaceable, loving life between man and wife, the woman muſt be meek, and the man live with his wife as a man of knowledge; and they muſt walk together as the heirs of life; why ſo? *that your prayers may not be hindred.* Private contentions in families are great hindrances of family-prayers: ſo our public diviſions and contentions are the great hindrances of the prayers of chriſtians in a more public way. How were they wont to pour forth their hearts in prayer together? but now it is otherwiſe. Men do not now walk together as the heirs of life, therefore their prayers are hindred. God accepts not of our gift, if we offer it when our hearts are at a diſtance from our brethren. When breaches continue, and we are not reconciled, you know Chriſt requires us to leave our gift at the altar, till reconciliation be made. It is the Spirit of God in the ſaints that is the ſpirit of prayer: now God's ſpirit is a dove-like, meek, quiet, and peaceable ſpirit.

Sixthly. They hinder the uſe of our Gifts.

WHEN veſſels are foured with vinegar, they ſpoil liquor that is poured into them, they make it good for nothing: many men have excellent gifts, but they are in ſuch ſour, vinegar ſpirits, that they are of little or no uſe in church and commonwealth.

1. In theſe times of diviſion, many men exerciſe their gifts and parts in little or nothing elſe but in matters of diviſion. Do you think that God hath given you ſuch parts for no other end but this? 2. They have no hearts to impart to their brethren their gifts, in counſelling, admoniſhing, ſtrengthening, and comforting; no, their hearts are eſtranged from them, they care not to have any thing to do with them. But do

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you think, you are ſo far your own men, that you may keep in, or employ your talents as you pleaſe? are you not the ſtewards of Chriſt? are they not given to you for the edification of your brethren, as well as for good to yourſelves? can this ſatisfy your conſciences? Such a one differs from you, he hath angered you, therefore though you have opportunity of being uſeful to him, yet you refuſe it, as if it were at your liberty to lay out your abilities for good, or not; certainly this is not according to the mind of Chriſt. 1 Cor. xii. 7. The manifeſtation of the Spirit is given to every man, to profit withal.

3. If you do make uſe of your gifts for the good of others, yet diſſentions between you will hinder the profit of them, you are not like to do any good by them; except they be carried on by the oil of love, they will not ſoak into men's hearts. When did you ever know a wrangling contentious miniſter (though his gifts were never ſo excellent) do good amongſt his people? And what comfort can a man have of his life, if he be laid aſide by God, as a uſeleſs man?

4. Theſe diviſions cauſe men to make the gifts of others uſeleſs to themſelves, whereas God puts opportunity into men's hands, to get much good by thoſe excellent gifts their brethren have; yet if there be any difference between them, either they will not acknowledge the gifts of God in them, or otherwiſe they have no mind to receive from them that good they might have, becauſe their hearts are not with them.

Seventhly. They hinder our Graces.

HOW little of God and Chriſt, how little ſpiritualneſs in profeſſors of religion, ſince theſe rents and diviſions have been amongſt us, in compariſon of what in former times hath appeared! As the members of the body (ſays *Auguſtine*) are not quickened, except they be joined, ſo even the members of Chriſt do not receive of the quickening virtue of Chriſt, except they be joined: here is the reaſon of the deadneſs, coldneſs, emptineſs,

emptineſs, barrenneſs, vanity of your ſpirits, you are not joined: O where are the heavenly Chriſtians that were wont to be; thoſe humble, thoſe holy, gracious ſouls, who lived by faith, who were able to deny themſelves; their whole lives were nothing but a continual exerciſe of ſelf-denial; who were not only patient, but joyful under afflictions? Where are thoſe watchful Chriſtians who walked cloſe with God, who enjoyed ſuch ſpiritual communion with him, as made their faces ſhine in their holy, heavenly converſations? Where are thoſe tender, broken-hearted Chriſtians, that were wont to be, who lived upon the word, to whom the word was more ſweet than honey and the honey-comb? Now there is another kind of profeſſors of religion, as if godlineſs in theſe days were not of the ſame kind with that which was formerly. If our forefathers, who were the moſt holy and gracious, ſhould riſe again, they would not own thoſe for profeſſors of religion, who now make a great noiſe, keep a great ſtir about religion, as if they had got up higher than their forefathers had, and yet are looſe, vain, frothy, falſe in their way. Certainly, thoſe holy, gracious ſaints, whom theſe new profeſſors ſlight, were they alive they would abominate them, as the great diſgrace of, and diſhonour to, Jeſus Chriſt and his ſaints. Our diviſions hinder the breaking forth of the luſtre, the ſhine of religion in the beauty and glory of it. The fire of our contentions raiſes ſuch a ſmoak, that it all beſmothers us, it takes away our comelineſs, it makes us look black; no amiableneſs appears in the ways of religion to convince men of the excellency of them. Scratched faces, rent and torn garments we account a ſhame to us; diſtracted, divided ſpirits, rending and tearing one another, and from one another in our divided ways; O how uncomely doth it render us, and that profeſſion of religion that we take upon us! The *Turks* were wont to wonder much at our *Engliſhmen*, for pinking and cutting their clothes, counting them little better than madmen, for making holes in whole cloth, which time of itſelf would tear too ſoon: the cuts, rents,

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ſlaſhes that are in our ſpirits, in our diviſions, are much more uncomely, and may juſtly render us fooliſh and mad in the eyes of all that do behold us. Our diviſions hinder our ſtrength: if you untwiſt a cable, how weak is it in the ſeveral parts of it? A three-fold cord is not eaſily broken, but a ſingle one is: divide a ſtrong current into ſeveral rivulets, and how ſhallow and weak will the courſe of the water be. They hinder our doing good in public; that which concerns many, muſt be done by many: but how can two, much leſs many, walk together, if they be not agreed? That which one does, the other ſeeks to undo: now although God can turn whatſoever is contrary to his work, to the furtherance of it, yet man cannot do ſo. When God would hinder the work of building *Babel*, he comes down and confounds their tongues, ſo that they could not join together in it: Thus when the devil would hinder the work of *Jeruſalem*, he knows no way more likely than by dividing the hearts of thoſe who are employed, if he poſſibly can, that thereby he might bring confuſion.

They hinder our own ends. None are more croſſed in their ends and deſigns, than contentious people; we have not the mutual benefit of one another's eſtates, houſes, the many ways of accommodation and help for one another, as heretofore we were wont to have; now every man ſhifts for himſelf; ſcarce any man who knew what the heartineſs of friendſhip meant, enjoys thoſe outward accommodations as he was wont. They hinder the bleſſing of God. Pſalm cxxxiii. the Pſalmiſt commending the love of brethren, concludes, *there the Lord commanded the bleſſing, even life for evermore.* There! that is where the love of brethren is, there is a bleſſing, a bleſſing commanded by God; it comes with power, and this no leſs than life, and this life for evermore. God dwells in *Salem*, ſays *Luther*, not in *Babylon*; where there is peace, not where there is confuſion.

Thus you ſee how great evil there is in our diviſions, in reſpect of what good we loſe by them; now then conſider, whether it be poſſible that any gain we can get by them can recompenſe this loſs; can any thing

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got by them quit the coſt? But if it could be ſuppoſed our loſs may be recompenſed, yet I am ſure nothing can countervail the evil there is in them, in reſpect of the ſinfulneſs of them. That is the next head.

The Sinfulneſs of our Diviſions.

THOUGH there be ſin in many things mentioned, yet we conſidered them in reference to our good that was hindered, but now let us conſider what venom of ſin there is in them. The number 2 hath been accounted accurſed, becauſe it was the firſt that departed from unity. The departure from that unity God would have, is a very curſed thing, for it hath much ſin in it. That which St. Auguſtine ſays of original ſin, we may well apply to our diviſions, they are ſin, the puniſhment of ſin, the cauſe of ſin, nothing but a heap of ſin.

Firſt, they are againſt the ſolemn charge and command of God, and of Jeſus Chriſt. 1 John iii. 23. *This is his commandment, that we ſhould believe on the name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt, and love one another as he gave us commandment.* It is not an arbitrary thing that we ſhould love one another, but it is the command of God, and a great command joined to that of believing in his Son Jeſus Chriſt. The one is as truly neceſſary to ſalvation as the other. Let men talk of faith, of believing on the Son of God, of truſting to free grace in Chriſt, yet if they have dividing contending ſpirits, no love, no ſweetneſs, no grace of union with the ſaints, their faith is a dead faith. And becauſe God ſtands much upon this to have his people live together in love, at the beginning of the verſe he ſays, *It is his commandment:* at the end of the verſe he ſays, *He gave us commandment:* and it is alſo obſervable, that he ſays of the commandment of love; that *he gave us that commandment.* It is a gift, for it is a ſweet commandment; we ſhould not only ſubmit to it, as being bound by the authority of it: but we ſhould open our hearts to it, and embrace it joyfully as a gift from God. The commandment

mandment of love God gives us as a gift from his love: the excellency of theſe commandments are further amplified, ver. 24. *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.* I do not think that you can find in all the ſcripture, any command of God in one verſe and a piece of another ſo inculcated and commended. Again, chap. iv. 21. *This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother alſo.* If you think you have any command to love God, or to believe in Jeſus Chriſt; know the ſame authority lays a command upon you, to love your brother alſo. John xv. 12. *This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you:* and ver. 17. *Theſe things I command you, that ye love one another.* Chriſt you ſee likewiſe makes a great matter of the ſaints loving one another: ſurely the ſin then muſt needs be great that breaks ſuch a great commandment as this, upon which God the Father, and Jeſus Chriſt his Son, lays ſo much weight.

Secondly. Theſe unkind and unloving diviſions, are againſt the prayer of Jeſus Chriſt; yea, againſt that prayer he made for us a little before he died: John xvii. 21. he prayed to his Father, that all who did believe, and ſhould after believe on him, might be one as his Father is in him, and he is in his Father, and that they *may be one in the Father and him.* As if he ſhould ſay, O Father, I am now going out of the world, and I foreſee, when I am gone, even thoſe whom thou haſt given me, who are one in me and in thee, will meet with ſtrong temptations to divide them one from another. But, O Father, I beſeech thee, let thy fatherly care be over them, to keep their hearts together, that they may be united in the ſtrongeſt union that is poſſible for creatures to be united in. O Father, let them be one as thou and I am one. Would we not be loath to loſe the benefit of that heavenly prayer of Chriſt for us in that xvii. of John: read it over, ſee what ſoul-raviſhing excellency there is in it, ſeeing he hath expreſsly ſaid he intended us who live now in it, as well as thoſe diſciples who then lived with him. Let us prize

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this prayer, as being more to us than ten thouſand worlds. *Luther* writes a chiding letter to *Melanƈthon*; "By thoſe ſinful diſtruſtful fears and carking thoughts of yours, ſays he, you do *Irritas facere præces noſtras*, you make void our prayers." How great then is our diviſions! By them we do what in us lies to make void as concerning us, the prayer, that bleſſed prayer of Jeſus Chriſt.

Thirdly. Our diviſions are very diſhonourable to Jeſus Chriſt; were it, that they darkened our names only, it were not ſo much; but that which darkens the glory of Jeſus Chriſt, ſhould go very near unto us. I have read of *Alexander Severus*, ſeeing two Chriſtians contending one with another, commanded them that they ſhould not preſume to take the name of Chriſtians upon themſelves any longer; "For (ſays he) you diſhonour your Maſter Chriſt, whoſe diſciples you profeſs to be. It is a diſhonour to a general to have his army routed and run into confuſion." The devil ſeems to prevail againſt us in theſe our diviſions, ſo as to rout us. John xvii. 21, 23. is a notable ſcripture to ſhew the ſinfulneſs of our diviſions, in the diſhonour they put upon Chriſt, and it may be as ſtrong an argument againſt them as any I know in the book of God. Chriſt praying to the Father for the union of his ſaints, uſes this argument, O Father, let this be granted, *That the world may believe that thou haſt ſent me:* and again, ver. 23. *Let them be perfect in one, that the world may know that thou haſt ſent me.* If they be not united one to another in love and peace, but have a ſpirit of diviſion ruling amongſt them, what will the world think? Surely that thou didſt not ſend me; that I who am their head, their teacher, and Lord, never came from thee, for thou art wiſdom, holineſs and love, and if I had come from thee, then thoſe who own me to be theirs, and whom I own to be mine, would hold forth in their converſations ſomething of that ſpirit of holineſs, wiſdom, and love, there is in thee; but when the world does not ſee this in them, but the clean contrary, they will never believe that I came from thee; thoſe truths I came

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into the world to make known as from thee, O Father, will not be believed, but rather perſecuted; if thoſe who profeſs them, by their diviſions one from another, and oppoſitions one againſt another, ſhew forth a ſpirit of pride, folly, envy, frowardneſs; therefore, O Father, let them be as thou and I am one; if this petition be not granted, how ſhall I look the world in the face; I ſhall be contemned in the world: what am I come down from thee, for ſuch glorious ends as indeed thoſe were for which I came into the world, and when I ſhould come to attain thoſe ends for which I came, ſhall there be ſuch a carriage in thoſe who do profeſs my name, that by it the world ſhall perſuade themſelves, that thou didſt never ſend me? O what a ſore evil would this be! Surely any Chriſtian heart muſt needs tremble, at the leaſt thought of having a hand in ſo great an evil as this is.

Fourthly. Diviſions are ſinful becauſe they grieve the holy Spirit of God; Epheſ. iv. 30, 31. *Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are ſealed to the day of redemption.* Surely there is no godly heart but will ſay, O God, forbid that I ſhould do any thing to grieve the good Spirit of God; it is the Spirit that hath enlightened me, that revealed the great myſteries of God, of Chriſt, of eternal life unto me; it is that Spirit that hath drawn my ſoul to Jeſus Chriſt, that hath comforted it with thoſe conſolations that are more to me than ten thouſand worlds; the Spirit that hath ſtrengthened me, that helps me againſt temptations, that carries me through difficulties, that enables me to rejoice in tribulations; the Spirit that hath ſealed me to the day of redemption; and now ſhall I be guilty of ſo great a ſin as to grieve this bleſſed Spirit of the Lord? If I did but know wherein I have grieved it, it could not but make my ſoul to bleed within me, that I ſhould have ſuch a wretched heart to grieve this holy Spirit, by whom my ſoul hath enjoyed ſo much good: I hope I ſhould for ever hereafter take heed of that thing; I would rather ſuffer any grief in the world to mine own ſpirit, than be any occaſion of grief to that bleſſed Spirit

rit of God. But would you know what it is that hath grieved it, and what it is that is like to grieve it further? Mark what follows, ver. 31. *Let all bitterneſs, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil ſpeaking, be put away from you, with all malice.* And would you do that which may pleaſe the holy Spirit? Oh! God knows it would be the greateſt joy in the world for me to do it: then obſerve ver. 32, *Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another; even as God for Chriſt's ſake hath forgiven you.*

Fifthly. Theſe diviſions do grieve and offend our brethren: this ſhould not be a light matter with us; Chriſt accounts it a great evil to offend one of his little ones: we may think it a little matter to give offence to ſome of God's people who are poor and mean in the world; ſo long as we have the bravery of it, and the countenance of great men, no matter for them. But, friend, whatſoever ſlight thoughts thou haſt of it, Chriſt thinks it a great matter; you may look upon them as under you; the times may favour you more than them; but if you ſhall give them cauſe to go to God, to make their moans to him, of any ill uſage they have had from you, and ſay, Lord thou knoweſt I was for peace to the uttermoſt I could, ſo far as I was able to ſee thy word for my guide; but theſe who heretofore were as brethren to me, now their ſpirits are eſtranged, their hearts are embittered, their words and their carriage are very grievous, and all becauſe I cannot come up to what their opinions, their ways are. Certainly this would prove very ill to you, regard it as lightly as you will.

It may be when others carry themſelves towards you otherwiſe than you expected, you vent yourſelves againſt them in quarrelling, in giving ill language, in villifying and ſcorning; your ſtrength runs out this way; but there are a generation of men, who being wronged, improve their ſtrength in patient bearing, yet in making their moan to God in the exerciſe of faith, in committing their cauſe to him. In Matt. xviii. from 24—31. you have the ſtory of the ſervant who had ten

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thouſand talents forgiven him, who yet took his fellow-ſervant by the throat, who owed him a hundred pence, and put him into priſon: the text ſays, *When his fellow-ſervants ſaw what was done, they were ſorry, and came and told their lord what was done.* You do not hear them cry out of their fellow-ſervant, O what a vile baſe wretch was he, who would deal thus with his fellow! No, but they went and told their lord. It is not the way of Chriſtians when they apprehend wrong, to give ill language, to ſeek to right themſelves or others by bitter provoking expreſſions; but their hearts being filled with grief, if they muſt needs vent it, if quiet debates with their brethren will not eaſe them, let them vent themſelves in the pouring forth their complaints to the Lord.

Sixthly. There is much ſin in our diviſions, for they ſtir up much corruption on all ſides, both in ourſelves and others; as if you ſhake a glaſs of water that has dirt in the bottom, the dirt ſpreads itſelf all over: ſo doth the dirty ſtuff of our hearts; theſe diviſions cauſing a commotion in them, thoſe corruptions are now diſcovered, that neither ourſelves nor others had thought had been in us. Do not ſay in your hearts, and it may be one to another, who would have thought it poſſible, that ſo much filthy ſtuff ſhould lie ſo long in ſuch men's hearts undiſcovered, which now appears ſince theſe unhappy diviſions have been amongſt us? James iii. 16. Where there is envying and ſtrife, there is confuſion, and every evil work. When ſnakes are cold they lie ſtill; but if the heat of fire come to them, then they hiſs, and put forth their ſtings: thus men's corruptions heat by the fire of contention, that is kindled amongſt us; they begin to ſtir, to act, yea, to riſe very high. The reaſon that ſome give of that prohibition of the apoſtle, Epheſ. iv. *Let not the ſun go down upon your wrath;* which alſo I find *Chryſoſtom* upon the place gives, is this, becauſe when men's wrath is ſtirred by contending, if it continues in the heat of it till night, as they lie upon their beds, their corruptions will be boiling, they will lie muſing and plotting

againſt thoſe that contend with them, their thoughts in the night ſeaſon will work up their corruptions to a great height. Have you not found it ſo, when the ſun was gone down upon your wrath, you could hardly ſleep that night? *William* the Conqueror in his firſt year commanded, that every night at eight o'clock a bell ſhould be rung, and that all people then ſhould put out their fire, which they called the *Curfew Bell.* It were well if ſome were admoniſhed every night, to cover the fire of their paſſions.

We ſtir up likewiſe the corruptions of others, in theſe our diviſions. Do you not ſee thoſe diſtempers, formerly mentioned, working and breaking forth in your brethren, when you provoke them in your contending with them? O pity, pity thy brother, if thou canſt not pity thyſelf; does it not grieve thee that thy brother ſhould bring ſin upon himſelf? Were it not better for thee to ſuffer, than for thy brother to ſin? It is an evil thing to be an occaſion of grief to our brethren, *The Lord does not willingly grieve the Children of men;* but to be an occaſion of ſin to them is much worſe. When did you ever meet with your brethren, and had your ſpirits put into any heat, but after your parting, when you began to be cool, you then ſaw cauſe to grieve for unbeſeeming words, carriage and breakings forth of paſſion, that there was either in you or them: ſometimes in a froward debate there is more ſin committed in one hour, than there is otherwiſe in a whole twelvemonth, between thoſe who live lovingly and ſweetly together. Yea, ſometimes ſuch corruptions are ſtirred by differences and diviſions, that are incompatible to a ſaint; namely, the rejoicing in the evil of other men, yea, of godly men. *David* ſaid his zeal had even conſumed him, becauſe his enemies had forgotten God's word; but ſome men's zeal doth even conſume them, becauſe their friends do remember God's word; the more inoffenſively they walk, the more are they troubled; it were endleſs to mention the uncharitableneſs, wrong, malice, injuſtice, oppreſſion, cruelty,

cruelty, with the abundance of other ſins that are cauſed by our diviſions.

Seventhly. Yet further, as they ſtir up ſin, ſo they harden in ſin; as fire hardens the clay into brick. Thus are men's hearts hardened in evil by our diviſions, men who heretofore had tender ſpirits, their hearts were ready to relent upon any brotherly admonition; but now they are ſtiff, they ſtand out ſturdily, yea, behave themſelves ſcornfully: O this fire of contention hath baked their luſts, hath hardened their hearts. Ezek. xi. God promiſes to give his people one heart, which ſhould be a heart of fleſh. While the hearts of the ſaints are united, they are tender, but when they divide, they grow hard. Hence is the reaſon why brethren being fallen out, it is ſo hard to convince either of them of any ill carriage: they are angry, and they think they do well to be angry, and all becauſe their hearts are hardened. *Jonah* was in a pettiſh mood, and his heart was hardened with it; let God himſelf come now to convince him, he ſtands it out, he will by no means acknowledge himſelf faulty; no, what he does he will juſtify, he does well to be angry.

Eighthly. There is much ſin in them, for they are means to keep off others from God's ways; if this be their religion, ſay they, for men to quarrel one with another, we will have none of it: carnal hearted men are apt to charge religion with all the miſcarriages of the profeſſors of it. You know what ſaint *Paul* ſays, 1 Cor. xiv. *If men ſpeak with ſtrange tongues, and there comes in one unlearned, will they not be to him as barbarians, will they not ſay they are mad.* Thus when the men of the world look upon thoſe who profeſs religion, and ſee their carriage, their ways ſtrange, and divided amongſt themſelves, will they not think them even as mad people? *I charge you*, ſays the church, Cant. iii. 5. *by the roes and by the hinds, that you ſtir not up my beloved till he pleaſe.* This by ſome is interpreted thus, the roes and hinds are ſhy and fearful creatures, and by them are ſignified ſuch as are obſervers of the ways of the church, and ready to take offence at any thing they

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ſee amiſs in them; therefore I charge you, ſay thoſe who are faithful, that you do nothing that may make any diſturbance in the church, whereby ſuch as are obſervers of your ways ſhall be offended. If they ſee miſcarriages in you, they will fly off; and of all miſcarriages there are none more offenſive to the lookers on, than wranglings and contendings: when they ſee this, they will conclude, ſurely this is not the way of Chriſt.

They are a very ill improvement of our zeal and courage: zeal and courage have ſuch an excellency in them, that it is a thouſand pities they ſhould have no other improvement, than to raiſe and maintain quarrels and diviſions. The Lord hath uſe for every man's zeal and courage; reſerve them for him, for ſome notable work that God hath for thee to do, and do not ſpend them about that from whence comes no good. If ſoldiers lying near their enemies, having no ſtore of powder, ſhould ſpend what they have in making ſquibs and fire-works, would they not be condemned of folly, if not of treachery, by all? Thoſe who have the moſt zeal and courage, have little enough to ſerve their turn, for the ſervice that God requires of them: and muſt this be ſpent in unworthy babblings, wranglings and quarrellings? That man's body is in an ill condition that has a ſore to which the humours have recourſe to feed it, leaving the ſupply of the parts of the body that are to be nouriſhed and maintained by them: the ſore is fed, but the other parts grow lank and feeble. Thus it is with many men's ſpirits, they are diſtempered, and then what abilities they have, are drawn away to feed thoſe diſtempers. What account can be given to God of ſuch a uſe of them as this?

They make very much againſt the cauſe of Chriſt now in hand, the great work of reformation. Had we joined hand in hand together, and ſet ourſelves to ſerve the Lord with one ſhoulder, what abundance of ſervice might have been done! how high might the honour of Chriſt been advanced amongſt us before this day! But while one draws one way, another another;

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one ſeeks to ſet up, and another labours to pull down, how can the work go on? You will ſay, that is true indeed, things would go on apace, if thoſe who differ from others, would give up their judgments and practices to them, to believe what they believe, and to do what they do. But how can this be? You would not have them give up their judgments or practices to them, till they know them to be right; and how can that be, 'till they by diſcuſſing, praying, reading and meditating, find that out? I anſwer, if ſome men had certainly found out the right, and other men knew certainly that they had done ſo, then the work were at an end.

Theſe our diſſentions are againſt a great part of the covenant of grace which God hath made with his people in Chriſt, and thoſe many promiſes of ſo much peace that there is to be in the times of the goſpel. We by theſe do that which tends to make void the covenant; we do as it were ſay, Chriſt is not come in the fleſh. 1 John iv. 3. *Every ſpirit that confeſſeth not that Chriſt is come in the fleſh, is not of God, and this is that ſpirit of antichriſt.* Many men talk much of antichriſt; but ſuch as profeſs the goſpel, and yet are of unpeaceable, ſnarling, contending ſpirits, they have the ſpirit of antichriſt; and they do not confeſs that Jeſus Chriſt is come in the fleſh. It is an argument the Jews have againſt Chriſt; ſay they, if he were come, then that prophecy, Iſaiah xi. 6. would be fulfilled; *the wolf ſhall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard ſhall lie down with the kid, and the cow and the bear ſhall feed together,* &c. But this is not ſo. They alſo bring many other places where peace is propheſied of, as Iſaiah ix. 7. *of the increaſe of his government and peace ſhall be no end.* Thoſe who ſeek for this government, ſhould ſeek for his peace alſo.

By our diviſions we croſs that end that God aimed at, in the variety of his adminiſtrations in the gifts and graces of men; that this was not Chriſt's end in diſpenſing gifts and graces in a different way, that there might

might be fuel adminiſtered to contentions and quarrels, but rather to exerciſe love, we ſpake to before.

THE CURES OF DIVISIONS.

WHAT gracious heart is not cut aſunder with grief for thoſe ſore and fearful evils, that there are in, and come from our diviſions; and is not even the ſecond time cut aſunder with careful thoughts in itſelf, what may be done to heal them?

Matt. vi. 25. Chriſt forbids that carking care that cuts our hearts, when it is in matters concerning ourſelves, yea, for our lives; *take no thought for your life*, ſo it is in your books: but the word ſignifies, Do not take ſuch thought as ſhould cut your hearts aſunder: ſo v. 28. Why do you divide your hearts? But though this charge of Chriſt be doubled and doubled again, againſt our careful, dividing, cutting thoughts about ourſelves, yet for the uniting the hearts of the ſaints together, for the good of the church, this heart-cutting care is not only allowed, but required; 1 Cor. xii. 25. *That there ſhould be no ſchiſm in the body, but that the members ſhould have the ſame care one for another.* The words are, *That the members may care the ſame thing one for another*; and that with dividing, cutting care; that there might be no ſchiſm in the body. The word that is here for *care*, is the ſame that in the former places in the 6th of Matt. is forbidden.

The expreſſions of my thoughtful cares about this work, are the ſubject of this time: when I ſet myſelf about it, my heart doth even ach within me, at the apprehenſion of the difficulty of it. There are ſome diſeaſes that are called *opprobria medicorum*, the diſgraces of phyſicians; becauſe they know not what to ſay or do to them; or if they do any thing, it is to little purpoſe. If there be any foul-diſeaſe, that is *opprobrium theologorum*, the diſgrace of divines, it is this of contention

tention and diviſion. How little has all that they have ſtudied, and endeavoured to do, prevailed with the hearts of men! What ſhall we do? Shall we but join in this one thing, to ſit down together, and mourn one over another, till we have diſſolved our hearts into tears, and ſee if we can thus get them to run one into another? O that it might be, what ſorrow ſoever it coſts us!

We read, Judges ii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. the Lord ſent an angel from *Gilgal* to the men of *Iſrael*, who told them how graciouſly he had dealt with them, yet they had contrary to the command of God made a league with the inhabitants of the land, for which the Lord threatened they ſhould be as thorns in their ſides. When the angel ſpake theſe words to the children of *Iſrael*, the people lift up their voice and wept. And they called the name of that place *Bochim*, a place of tears. Their ſin was too much joining, joining in league where God would not have them: thoſe whom they joined with, God told them ſhould be thorns in their ſides. Upon this they wept, and that ſo ſore, that the place received its name from their weeping. But oh that the Lord would ſend his angel, yea, his Spirit to us, to convince us of our evil, that we to this day have not joined in ſure league one with another; but are thorns in the ſides of one another; and that after ſo many mercies: yea, that we are ſo falſe one to another, though the Lord hath never broke covenant with us, which was the heart-breaking argument the angel uſed, ver. 1. Yea, the Lord hath done abundantly for us beyond our hopes, deſires, and thoughts, and that after all this there ſhould be nothing but breaches and diviſions amongſt us: that we ſhould be not only thorns, but ſpears and ſwords in one another's ſides, piercing to one another's hearts! Are we the children of *Iſrael?* Let our hearts then break, and melt, and mourn, and bleed, and reſolve that nothing ſhall comfort them, but peace with our God, and peace one with another.

That one text, 1 Theſ. iv. 9. were enough alone to pierce our hearts through and through; *As touching brotherly*

therly love, ye need not that I write unto you, ſaith the apoſtle, *for ye yourſelves are taught of God to love one another*. O Lord, what are we in theſe days ſuch kind of Chriſtians as thoſe were? O that it were ſo with us, that we had no need to be wrote to, to be preached to, concerning this. Does it appear by our carriage one towards another, that we are taught of God to love one another? But that God may teach us this day, attend to what ſhall be ſaid to you in his name, which I ſhall caſt into *Joining principles, Conſiderations, and Directions*.

I ſhall not need to be long in theſe: for take away dividing principles, dividing diſtempers, dividing practices, and be thoroughly convinced of the evil of diviſions, and one would think our hearts ſhould of themſelves run into one another. But that I may not ſeem to leave our wounds open, ſo that air ſhould get into them; but endeavour the cloſing of them, and ſo the healing: I ſhall ſpeak ſomething to theſe heads.

The firſt joining principle.

In the midſt of all differences of judgment, and weakneſſes of the ſaints, it is not impoſſible but that they may live in peace and love together.

IF notwithſtanding the differences from God's mind, and many weakneſſes, there may be peace and love between God and his ſaints: then ſurely notwithſtanding theſe things, the ſaints may be at love and peace among themſelves. Let this be laid for a ground, and let our hearts be much poſſeſſed with it, we ſhall find it very helpful to our cloſing. Away with that vain conceit which hath been the great diſturber of churches in all ages, if men differ in their judgment and practice in matters of religion, though it be in things that are but the weakneſs of godly men, yet there muſt needs be heart burning and diviſion. Let all peaceable men deny this conſequence: let us not ſay, it will be ſo, and that our words may be made good, afterwards indeed

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make it ſo; certainly the connection of them, if there be any, is rather from the corruption of our hearts, than from the nature of the things.

"There hath been much ado to get us to agree: we laboured to get our opinions into one, but they will not come together." It may be in our endeavours for agreement we have begun at the wrong end. Let us try what we can do at the other end; it may be we ſhall have better ſucceſs there. Let us labour to join our hearts, to engage our affections one to another: if we cannot be of one mind that we may agree, let us agree that we may be of one mind.

The ſecond joining principle.

That ſhall never be got by ſtrife, that may be had by love and peace.

WE would all fain have our wills. Now that which lies uppermoſt upon many men's hearts, that which is the firſt thing they do, if their wills be croſſed, is preſently to ſtrive and contend; but this ſhould be the laſt thing, after all other means are tried; this ſhould never be made uſe of but in caſe of pure neceſſity. We ſhould firſt think, is there any way in the world whereby it is poſſible we may have our deſires ſatisfied with peace: let us try this, and another way, a third, a fourth, yea, a hundred ways, if they lie between us and the way of ſtrife, before we come to meddle with that.

Among thoſe means he directs for union, when St. Paul ſpeaks of love, *I will ſhew you*, ſays he, *a more excellent way*, a way of the higheſt excellency, beyond any expreſſion. The way of love, of engaging hearts one to another, is the only way to bring perſons into unity of judgment; yea, the only way when all is done, for men to have their wills. I may give you this or the other rule, to bring you to think and do the ſame thing, but that which hath an excellency in it with an hyperbole, is the way of love. If you could get your

minds to agree by other ways, certainly you cannot enjoy it with that ſweetneſs and comfort, as you may if you have got it this way. Certainly there is no man living but hath cauſe to repent him, that ever he got that by ſtrife and contention that he might have got by love and peace. What hinders why ſoft and gentle words may not prevail, as well as hard and bitter language? Why may not a loving, winning carriage do as much as ſevere, rigid violence? If it may, thou provideſt ill for thine own peace and comfort, to leave this way and betake thyſelf to the other. Tell me, were it a ſign of valour in a man to draw his ſword at every inſect that comes near him? yea, at every fly that lights upon him? Were it not folly and madneſs? Why, he may by putting forth his finger put them off from him. Thy froward, choleric ſpirit is ready to draw at every thing that thou likeſt not. This is thy folly; though thou mayſt with leſs ado have what thou haſt a mind to. If I would put a feather from me, I need not ſtrike violently at it; a ſoft gentle breath will do it better. Why ſhould a man labour and toil till he ſweats again, to take up a pin? Have none of you ſometimes made a great ſtir in your families about that which, when the ſtir is a little over, you plainly ſee you might have done as well with a word ſpeaking. None but a cruel, harſh, ſordid ſpirited man will ſay, I had rather men ſhould fear me than love me. God prizes moſt what he hath from us by love.

The third joining principle.

It is better to do good than to receive good.

ACTIVE good is better than paſſive. Only God himſelf, his angels and ſaints, do good; but all creatures can receive good. This principle would quickly join us; for if this were in men's hearts, they would ſtudy to do all the good they could to one another, and to gain upon one another's hearts; and the more good we do to any, the more will our hearts be inclinable to

love

love them. The very communication of goodneſs, if it be out of a good ſpirit, carries the heart along with it to the ſubject this good is communicated to. The more good God doth to any, the more he loves them. So it is with us in our proportion: if you take a poor child from the dunghill, or out of the alms-houſe, and make him your heir, you do not only this good to him becauſe you love him, but you love more becauſe you look upon him as an object of your goodneſs, as one raiſed by you.

The fourth joining principle.

The good of other men is my good as well as theirs.

WE are all of one body: whatſoever good others have, it is the good of the body; it makes them ſome way able to do that good that we ſhould have done, or at leaſt that we ſhould deſire to have done.

Community in the church is more; 1 Cor. iii. 22. *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things preſent, or things to come, all are yours; you are Chriſt's, and Chriſt is God's.* If you be godly you have an intereſt in all the eminent godly men in the world; in all their gifts, their graces, in all they have or do; all that is in the world, that hath any good in it, is yours; yea, what is evil ſhall be ſerviceable to you for good. This is brought by the apoſtle to quiet the jarrings and contentions that were amongſt the Corinthians. One would be for *Paul*, another for *Apollos*; ſays the apoſtle, what need this contention, who you are for, and who another is for? They are all yours, all the excellency there is in them is the good of every one of you. A ſpecial reaſon why men contend ſo much is, they think the good that other men have is their evil, therefore they muſt either get it to themſelves, or darken it in thoſe that have it. But ſuch men, acted by ſuch a principle, are poor, low-ſpirited men. A man of a raiſed, enlarged ſpirit, opens his heart that it may be filled with that infinite good in

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which there is all good. Now if it be that good my ſoul cloſeth with, and is ſatisfied in, then whatſoever hath any goodneſs in it, be it where it will, it flows from this infinite ocean of good my ſoul is launched into, and ſome way or other flows into this again; tho' through men's corruptions, there may be windings and turnings in the courſe of it, yet hither it comes at laſt: and therefore it is mine as really and truly as any I have in mine own hand: my ſoul then ſhall rejoice in all the good I ſee my brethren have, and in all they do; I will bleſs God for it, and ſeek the furtherance of it what I can. Surely this man muſt needs be a man of peace and love.

The fifth joining principle.

My good is more in the public than in myſelf.

IT is becauſe we have ſuch private ſpirits, that there are ſuch contentions among us: were we more public-ſpirited, our contentions would vaniſh. When I read of what public ſpirits many of the heathens were, I am aſhamed to look upon many Chriſtians. *Paulus Æmilius*, hearing of the death of his children, ſpake with an undaunted courage thus, *That the gods had heard his prayer*, which was, *that calamities ſhould rather befal his family, than the commonwealth.* The publicneſs of his ſpirit made it very ſweet and lovely: the ſtory ſays of him, he entreated them gently and graciouſly whom he had ſubdued, ſetting forward their cauſes, even as if they had been his confederates, very friends and near kinſmen. Public-ſpirited men are men of ſweet and peaceable ſpirits.

The ſixth joining principle.

What I would have others do to me, that will I endeavour to do to them.

WOULD not I have others bear with me? I then will bear with them. I would have others do offices

of

of kindneſs to me; I will then do offices of kindneſs to them. I would have the carriage of others lovely, amiable to me; mine ſhall be ſo to them. I would have others live peaceably with me, I will do ſo with them. This rule of doing to others, as I would be done to, is a law of juſtice; ſuch juſtice as keeps the peace.

Chryſoſtom, in his thirteenth ſermon to the people of *Antioch*, makes uſe of this principle. Thus after Chriſt had ſpoken of many bleſſedneſſes, ſays he, *Thoſe things you would have others to do to you, do you to them: as if he ſhould ſay, there needs not many words, let thine own will be thy law: would you receive benefits? beſtow benefits then: would you have mercy? be merciful then: would you be loved? then love. Be you the judge yourſelf, be you the lawgiver of your own life. That which you hate, do not to another. Cannot you endure reproach? do not you reproach others. Cannot you endure to have others envy you? do not you envy others. Cannot you endure to be deceived? do not you deceive others.*

The ſeventh joining principle.

It is as great an honour to have my will by yielding, as by overcoming.

MANY men in their anger will ſay, I will be even with him. I will tell you a way how you may be above him: forgive him. By yielding, pardoning, putting up the wrong, you ſhew you have power over yourſelf, and this is a greater thing than to have power over another. Numb. xiv. 17, 18. *Now I beſeech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, pardon, I beſeech thee, the iniquity of this people*, ver. 19. and by this thou mayeſt honourably prevail with thy brother: hereby ſhalt thou heap coals of fire upon his head.

If a man offends me merely through weakneſs, this is his affliction; in this he is neither an enemy to himſelf nor me; he mourns for it, and I will pity him in his mourning: he is more troubled for what he hath done,

done, than I have cauſe to be for what I have ſuffered. If he offends willingly and purpoſely, he is his own enemy more than mine. When *Latimer* was cozened in buying a commodity, his friends telling him how he was cheated of his money, he fell to mourning for him that had cheated him, *He hath the worſt of it*, ſays he. If my heart riſes againſt a man in this, and I ſeek to oppoſe him in his way, it may very well be interpreted to be out of love to him, for my heart riſes againſt his enemy, I oppoſe his enemy, even himſelf, but an enemy to himſelf more than to me; he hath hurt me a little, but himſelf more. I am troubled a little for the wrong I ſuffer, but more for the evil he hath done. If his ways be enmity to God, I will oppoſe him, becauſe I love God, and no farther than wherein I may manifeſt my love to God, rather than hatred of him. When *Servetus* condemned *Zuinglius* for his harſhneſs, he anſwers, *In other things I will be mild, but not ſo in blaſphemies againſt God.* Let us keep our enmity within theſe bounds, and the peace of God will not be broke.

If when others wrong you, you care not what you do to right yourſelf, this is your folly and madneſs; ſuch a one hurt me, and I will therefore miſchief myſelf; he hath pricked me with a pin, and I will therefore in anger run my knife into my ſide. If in all we ſuffer, we be ſure to keep from righting ourſelves by any ways of ſin, there will not be much peace broke. Such an one is thine enemy, and wilt thou of one enemy make two? Wilt thou alſo be an enemy to thyſelf, yea, a greater enemy than he or any man living can be to thee? For all the men in the world cannot make thee ſin, except thou wilt thyſelf.

A father hath not ſo much power over his child, as to provoke him. Col. iii. 21. *Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath.* Surely if a man hath not this power over his child, he hath it not over his friend, his neighbour, much leſs his ſuperior: yet how many take delight in this, Such a thing I know will anger him, and he ſhall be ſure to have it! O wicked heart! doſt thou

ſee that this will be a temptation to thy brother, and wilt thou lay it before him? doſt thou not pray for thyſelf and for him, *Lord, lead us not into temptation?* We ſhould account it the greateſt evil to us of all the evil of afflictions, to be any occaſion of ſin to our brother; but what an evil ſhould this be to us, to provoke our brother to ſin? If we will needs be provoking, then let the apoſtle's exhortation prevail with us, Heb. x. 24. *Let us conſider one another to provoke unto love and good works.* Let us not conſider one another in a way of curioſity and emulation, to envy, or find fault with one another, from whence frowardneſs, pride, hatred, diſſentions, factions may ariſe, ſaith *Hyperius* upon the place; but conſider one another, ſo as we may further the good of one another, ſo as to make one another quick and active in that which is good.

But how will this join us one to another?

Anſw. Very much, both as it holds forth the goodneſs of peace with all men, and as it carries the heart ſtrongly to the making and keeping peace with God and a man's own conſcience. This peace with God and a man's own conſcience, will ſo ſweeten the heart, that it cannot but be ſweet towards every one: a man who hath ſatisfaction enough within, can eaſily bear affliction and troubles that come without. When *Saul* had made great breaches between God and his ſoul, and in his own conſcience, then he grew to be of a very froward ſpirit towards every man: before his apoſtacy he was of a very meek and quiet ſpirit, but this ſoured his ſpirit, and made it grow harſh, rugged, and cruel. This is the cauſe of the frowardneſs of many men and women in their families, and with their neighbours; there are ſecret breaches between God and their own conſciences.

Considerations.

GOD is love: there is anger and hatred in God as well as love: but God is never ſaid to be anger

ger or hatred, no not juſtice itſelf; but he loves that expreſſion of himſelf to the children of men, *God is love*. If God intended that all things amongſt men, either in church or commonwealth, ſhould be carried with ſtrictneſs of juſtice, he would rather have governed his church and the world by angels, who have right apprehenſions of juſtice, who are themſelves perfect, altogether free from thoſe evils that are to be puniſhed, than by men, whoſe apprehenſions of juſtice are exceeding weak, unconſtant, partial, as often falſe as true, and have much of that in themſelves, that they judge in others.

When our yielding is through ignorance, cowardice, baſe fear, and not from a principle of wiſdom and underſtanding; it is not ſo much out of true love to peace, as a fooliſh, ignorant, ſottiſh, ſordid ſpirit of our own: whereas had we had a ſpirit of wiſdom and courage, we might have peace upon more honourable terms. Indeed many think every kind of yielding baſeneſs, but they are for the moſt part ſuch as are not put to any great trial themſelves. But when our conſciences tell us, that what we do is what the rule allows us; it is not becauſe we would avoid trouble, but we find through God's grace, our hearts in ſome meaſure prepared for ſuffering, if God were pleaſed to call us to it, in any thing wherein he may have glory, and the public may be benefited; but becauſe all things duly conſidered, we ſee that God in ſuch a way ſhall have more glory, and our brethren generally more good: therefore, whatſoever becomes of our particular ſatisfaction in regard of eſteem, or otherways, we are willing to yield; and becauſe in this we find our hearts as much cloſing with God, enjoying communion with him in all holineſs and godly fear, and in other things that go as near to us, we are able to deny ourſelves as much as ever; in this we may have comfort, that it is not baſeneſs that makes us yield, but rather the grace of God enabling us to rule over our own ſpirits. The peace that we thus purchaſe with the ſuffering much in our names, and the loſs of many comforts, does not coſt us too dear.

God

God hath joined us together as we are men: we are not dogs, not wolves; then let us not be ſo one to another, Acts vii. 26. *Moſes* ſpeaks thus, to thoſe who ſtrove one with another: *Sirs, ye are brethren; why do you wrong one another?* There is a conſideration in this, that ye are *men;* if there were no more, ye ſhould not ſtrive one with another; but much more conſidering ye are *brethren.* If we be men, let us be humane: what is the meaning of humanity, but courteouſneſs, gentleneſs, and pleaſantneſs in our carriage one to another? But ſtill the conſideration grows higher, as we are the ſame countrymen of old acquaintance, in the ſame employment, of the ſame family and kindred, but above all, joined in ſuch a bleſſed root, the fountain of all love and peace. Epheſ. iv. 4. preſents this conſideration moſt fully to us: the reaſon the apoſtle gives why we muſt keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, is, becauſe *there is one body, and one Spirit, ye are called in one hope; one Lord, one faith, one baptiſm, one God and Father of all.* Here you have ſeven ones together in two or three lines. It is very much that the Spirit of God ſhould join ſo cloſe together ſeven ones; ſurely it is to be a ſtrong argument for us to unity.

1. One body; the meaneſt member is in the body. Is it comely for the body of Chriſt to be rent and torn? Any reference to Chriſt might perſuade unity; but union with Chriſt as the members with the body, what heart can ſtand againſt the ſtrength of this? What can cauſe one member to tear and rend another, but madneſs?

2. One ſpirit, 1 Cor. xii. 11. *that one and the ſelf-ſame ſpirit.* He does not only ſay, the *ſame ſpirit*, but *the ſelf-ſame ſpirit;* and as if that was not enough, he adds *one* to the *ſelf-ſame;* and that yet not enough, he ſays *that one.* The repeating the article hath a great elegancy in it: and is not this one ſpirit of love and meekneſs? What does a froward, contentious ſpirit do in thee, who profeſſeſt thyſelf to be a Chriſtian? What, ſays *Cyprian*, does the fierceneſs of wolves, the madneſs

of

of dogs, the deadly poiſon of ſerpents, the bloody rage of beaſts, in a Chriſtian's breaſt?

3. Called in one hope, are you not heirs, joint heirs of the ſame kingdom, and do you contend as if one belonged to the kingdom of light, and the other to the kingdom of darkneſs?

4. One Lord; you ſerve the ſame Lord and Maſter. Is it for the credit of a Maſter, that his ſervants are always wrangling and fighting one with another? Is it not a tedious thing in a family that the ſervants can never agree? Mark how ill the Lord takes this, Matt. xxiv. 49, 50, 51. that evil ſervant who begins to ſmite his fellow-ſervants, provokes his Lord againſt him, ſo as to come upon him with ſuch ſeverity as to cut him aſunder, and to appoint his portion with the hypocrites; or as it is in the Greek, he will divide him in two; he by his ſmiting his fellow-ſervants makes diviſions, but his Lord will divide him. It may be he pretends that his fellow-ſervants do not do their duty as they ought, as if he were more careful of the honour of his Lord than others. But in the mean while he inveighs againſt others, ſmiting them with the tongue, and otherwiſe as he is able. He ſits at full tables, eats and drinks of the beſt, with ſuch as are carnal and ſenſual; but they are great men, to have their countenance is brave; this is extreme ſuitable to a carnal heart, who yet keeps up a profeſſion of religion, and hath ſome form of godlineſs; he is afraid to loſe his fleſhly contentment, therefore he ſmites thoſe who ſtand in his way: thus diviſions and troubles are made in God's family: the Lord the Maſter of it will reward accordingly; he will divide ſuch by cutting them aſunder, and appointing them their portion with the hypocrites.

5. One faith. What though we agree not together in ſome things of leſſer moment, yet we agree in one faith. Why ſhould we not then keep the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace? The agreement in the faith one would think ſhould ſwallow up all the diſagreements. We ſhould rather bleſs God for keeping men ſound in the faith, than contend with them for

leſſer

leſſer miſtakes. When the Phariſees, Acts xxiii. 9. underſtood that *Paul* agreed with them in that great doctrine of the reſurrection, they preſently overlooked his other differences, ſaying, *We find no evil in this man.* Our brethren agree with us in more fundamentals than this, and yet we can find evil in them, and aggravate their evil beyond what it is, and improve it all we can againſt them. This is worſe than Phariſaical.

Mr. Calvin, writing to our countrymen at *Frankford*, (who fled for their lives in witneſs to the truth, yet miſerably jarring and contending one againſt another there, to the ſcandal of all the churches of God in thoſe parts) begins his epiſtle thus: *This doth grievouſly torment; it is extremely abſurd that diſſentions ſhould ariſe amongſt brethren, exiles, fled from their country for the ſame faith, and for that cauſe which alone in this your ſcattering, ought to be to you as a holy band, to keep you faſt bound together.* Their contentions were about church worſhip.

6. One baptiſm. We are baptiſed into Chriſt's death. And is not that to ſhew that we ſhould be dead to all thoſe things in the world, that cauſe ſtrife and contention among men? Our baptiſm is our badge, our livery, it furthers ſomewhat the unity of ſervants that they wear all one livery.

7. One God. Though there be three perſons in the divine nature, and every perſon is God, yet there is but one God; here is an union infinitely beyond all unions that any creature can be capable of; the myſtery of this union is revealed to us, to make us in love with union. Our intereſt in this one God is ſuch a conjunction, as nothing can be more.

Joſeph's brethren, Gen. l. 17. looked upon this as having very great power in it to make up all breaches, to heal old grudges. After their father was dead, their conſciences miſgave them for what they had done to *Joſeph*; they were afraid old matters would break forth, and that *Joſeph* would turn their enemy. Now how do they ſeek to unite *Joſeph*'s heart to them? *We pray thee*, ſay they, *forgive the treſpaſs of the ſervants of the God of thy father*; and the text ſays, *Joſeph wept when*

when they ſpake unto him. Oh this was a heart-breaking ſpeech to *Joſeph!* The ſervants of the God of my father; ſhall my heart ever be eſtranged from the ſervants of the God of my father? The Lord forbid. This offence indeed was great, but their God is my God, and he was my father's God! This argument had more in it to draw Joſeph's heart to them, than if they had ſaid we are your brethren, we come from the loins you did; true that is ſomething, but the ſervants of the God of thy father is much more. Let us look upon all the godly, though they have many weakneſſes, and have not carried themſelves toward us as they ought, yet they are the ſervants, yea, the children of our God and of our father's God; let this draw our hearts to them. If they be one with us, in their intereſt in one God, let them be one with us in heart affection, to love, delight and rejoice in communion with them.

One God and Father, Mal. ii. 10. Job xxxi. 15. Is it ſeemly that one man's children ſhould be always contending, qnarrelling, and vilifying one another? Do you think this is pleaſing to your Father who is above all and through all? You have enough in your Father to ſatisfy your ſouls for ever; whatſoever you want otherways, he hath put honour enough upon you that he is your Father; why will ye contend and quarrel about trifles? *He worketh in all, and is in all.* This ſcripture is one of the moſt famous for the union of the ſaints in one, that we have in all the book of God. You will ſay, if we could ſee God in ſuch, if we could ſee grace and holineſs in them, our hearts would unite, but we ſee not theſe. Anſwer, Take heed thou doſt not reject any from being thy brother, whom Jeſus Chriſt at the great day will own for his, and God the Father will call his child. Many men are of ſuch ſpirits, they love to be altogether buſied about their brethren's differences, 'tis upon theſe their tongues and pens run; not to heal but widen them. You ſhall not hear them ſpeak about their agreements, their ſtrength is not bent to ſtrengthen them; or if at any time they do take notice of their union, it is to make

them

them more odious; or to ſtrengthen themſelves in what they differ from them; they deſire to get in men and to get from them, only to ſerve their own turns; this is an evil ſpirit.

Let us conſider men's tempers, ſpirits, temptations, age, gifts; there muſt be a due conſideration of all theſe, and we muſt indulge ſomething to them all; this would allay much ſtrife, as we read Num. xxxi. 21. We muſt deal with every man according to his temper; ſome men are by their complexions of a more harſh and rugged temper than others. Conſider what is the beſt way of dealing with ſuch; in the main they are faithful and uſeful, will join with and ſpend their lives for you; if the harſhneſs of their natures cauſe excreſcences, unpleaſing carriages; conſider their tempers; though no evil in them is to be juſtified, yet deal tenderly with them, indulge them what lawfully you may.

Some men's ſpirits though upright to God and you, have a fervour in them that is not qualified with that degree of wiſdom, meekneſs and humility as they ought; do not preſently take thoſe advantages againſt them, which they may perhaps give you; do not fly upon them as if thoſe unjuſtifiable expreſſions that drop from them, come from a malignant ſpirit; you know the men, and the manner of their communication; then paſs by weakneſſes.

Some men's temptations are very ſtrong; it may be their hearts are preſt with diſappointments, they may be pierced with the wants of many comforts you enjoy; they have family and perſonal temptations that you are freed from; you do not know what you might do under the like temptations.

Bleſs God that you are delivered from them; do not add to your brethren's affliction by taking advantage againſt them; but according to the rule of the apoſtle, Gal. vi. 1. Conſider, ſome all their days have lived in wicked families, diſorderly communities, and never were acquainted with the ſociety of the ſaints, and that way of godlineſs that hath the moſt ſtrictneſs and power in it.

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You muſt not deal with them the ſame way you would deal with others, who have a godly education, and early and long acquaintance with the moſt ſtrict and powerful ways of godlineſs, but now oppoſe them. Conſider men's years; old age looks for reſpect, and juſtly too; eſpecially ſuch as have gone through the brunt, and ſuffered much for your good; though ſome infirmities ſhould break forth, that are incident to old age, we muſt cover and paſs by what we can, not forgetting that reſpect is due to the hoary head found in the way of righteouſneſs. Conſider men's gifts, that may be they are not able to underſtand what you do: thank God for your ſtrength, but be not angry with your brother becauſe he is weaker.

What we get by contention will never quit coſt: if thou haſt ſo much command of thy ſpirit, canſt ſo far overcome thy paſſions, as to get time in cool blood to caſt up thy accounts truly, what good thou haſt done, or what thou haſt got by ſuch contentions; and on the other ſide, caſt up what hurt thou haſt done, what ſin hath been committed by thee and thy party, what evil hath got into thy ſpirit; I fear you will have little cauſe to boaſt of or rejoice in your gains.

To be freed from that expence that comes in by ſtrife, is not a little gain, ſays *Ambroſe*. In ſtrife you will find there is a very great expence of time, gifts, and learning. Many men with the good gifts God hath given them, might have proved ſhining lights in the church, but by reaſon of their contentious ſpirits, prove no other than ſmoaking firebrands. It may be by all the ſtir you keep, you will never get your end, if you do, it will not quit coſt; the charge you have been at, comes to more than it is worth. God deliver me from having my end at ſuch a dear rate!

The ſtrongeſt have need of the weakeſt, therefore, let not the hand ſay it hath no need of the foot, nor the eye that it hath no need of the hand; God hath ſo tempered the body, that every member hath need of every member: little nails may be uſeful where great

wedges

wedges can do no good; little chips may help to ſet great logs on fire.

Conſider, when men provoke us we are ready to fly upon them, looking no further than the men with whom we are diſpleaſed; but take another ſight, and perhaps you may ſee the devil on the other ſide the hedge, who hath been the chief agent in this buſineſs: he prepares his net, *Auguſtine* ſaith, to catch men in; he raiſes up contentions and cauſes much trouble to be in churches and among brethren. You think all the evil is in the trouble of your contentions: O no, the devil is behind, he intends to bring ſome of you into ſome great ſin by theſe things; he hath ſet his net for you: when you are troubled and vexed by ſuch contentions, the devil ſees you fit for a temptation: now I hope, ſays he, to get him to do ſuch things, which otherwiſe I could never have got him to. O that we had hearts when we find contention ſtirring, to conſider, but is there not a temptation and ruin in them?

Conſider how the heart of God is ſet upon making peace with us; he was in Chriſt reconciling the world to himſelf: this work hath taken up the thoughts, council, and heart of God, above any thing that he ever did; this is the chief maſter-piece of all his works; there is more of the glory of God in this than all that he hath done. This is, and ſhall be the grand ſubject of admiration for ſaints and angels; the matter of their praiſes to all eternity. God was reſolved to have it whatſoever it coſt him, though the price were more than ten thouſand worlds were worth; it was no leſs than the blood of the Son of God, the ſecond perſon in the trinity, God bleſſed for evermore, Col. i. 14. What God hath done for peace with us, calls aloud to us to prize peace one with another; 'tis the apoſtle's ſentiment, 1 John iii. 16. if it coſt Chriſt his life to make our peace with God, we ſhould be willing to do any thing we are able, even to the hazard of our lives, to make peace among the ſaints; Chriſt laid down his life for this peace: alſo, Eph. ii. 14. Chriſt reconciles both unto God. But how? It is in one body. Lay

this

this conſideration near and warm to your hearts, and it will comfort you, and ſo preſerve and increaſe peaceable diſpoſitions in you toward one another.

Remember, God hath called us to peace; that caſe upon which the apoſtle mentions our calling to peace, is as difficult a caſe to preſerve peace in, as any can fall out in one's life; it was that of being unequally yoaked, one a believer and the other an infidel; yet being man and wife, he determines that the believer muſt be content to live with the unbeliever, as it becomes a wife or huſband, except he or ſhe of themſelves will depart; but they ſhould give them no occaſion of departing, but by their holy converſation ſeek to convert them: this was counted an hard taſk, but it muſt be ſaith the apoſtle, and grounds it upon this, God hath called us to peace.

There is another caſe almoſt as difficult as the former, where patience and quietneſs of ſpirit are put to trial; that is, when a ſervant meets with a harſh, rugged, cruel maſter that treats him wrongfully; one would think this might be allowed to put the ſpirit into a rage. No, ſaith the apoſtle, ſuch muſt be the command you muſt have over your ſpirits, that you muſt patiently bear this; and he grounds it upon, for hereunto are ye called, 1 Pet. ii. 21, 22. "But though huſbands and wives ſhould live at peace, though they ſuffer one from another; though ſervants ſhould put up with wrongs from their maſters; yet it follows not that the like patience ſhould be required in us when we are wronged by our equals, by thoſe to whom we have no ſuch band of relation to tie us." Yes, the argument is ſtrong in this caſe alſo, 1 Pet. iii. 8, 9.

Conſider the preſence of God and of Chriſt; our God, Father, Maſter, and Saviour, ſtands by looking on us. It is a moſt excellent paſſage that I find in an epiſtle of *Luther* to the miniſters of Noringburg. There were great diviſions amongſt them, he wrote to pacify their ſpirits one towards another. "Suppoſe, (ſays he) you ſaw Jeſus Chriſt ſtanding before you, and by his very eyes ſpeaking thus unto your hearts, What do you,

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O my dear children, whom I have redeemed with my blood, begotten again by my Spirit, to that end that you might love one another; know, that this is the mark of my diſciples. Leave this buſineſs, caſt it wholly upon me, I will look to it, there is no danger that the church ſhould ſuffer by this, though it ſhould be ſtilled; yea, though it ſhould die; but there is a great deal of danger if you diſſent among yourſelves, if you bite one another; do not thus ſadden my Spirit, do not ſpoil the angels of their joy in heaven; am not I more to you than all matters between you? than all your afflictions and all your offences? What, can any words of a brother, any unjuſt trouble penetrate your hearts, ſtick ſo faſt in you as my wounds, as my blood, as all that I am to you, your Saviour Jeſus Chriſt?" O that we had ſuch real apprehenſions of Chriſt looking upon, and ſpeaking unto us.

Let every man conſider his own weakneſſes; you are now ready to take offence from others, and within a while you are as likely to be as offenſive to others, there will then be as much need that they ſhould bear with you, as now there is that you ſhould bear with them. A common law of thoſe who intend to live at peace one with another, is, we deſire pardon and we give pardon.

Now let us conſider our mortality; it is but a little time we have to live. Shall the greater part of it, nay, why ſhould any part of it, be ſpent in contentions and quarrels? Sprinkle upon your hearts the meditations of death, that in a little while this fleſh of yours will be turned to duſt; let this quiet you.

Conſider what account we can give to Jeſus Chriſt, of all our diviſions, in the day of judgment.

When Chriſt ſhall come, will you ſtand before him with ſcratched faces, with black and blue eyes? 1 Theſ. iii. 12, 13. It will be a ſad thing to be found in our diviſions at the coming of Jeſus Chriſt! Matt. xxiv. 50. The coming of Chriſt is mentioned as a terror to thoſe who ſhall but begin to ſmite their fellow-ſervants.

We may wrangle and ſtand out one againſt another in our contentions now, but it will not be ſo eaſy to anſwer Jeſus Chriſt, as it is to anſwer one to another. In the name of Jeſus Chriſt, I now ſpeak unto you; yea, as from him, I beſeech and charge you, let no reaſon move you to contend with, diſſent, or ſeparate from your brethren, but that which you are perſuaded in your conſciences, and that after deep and ſerious examination, will hold out before, and will be approved by Jeſus Chriſt at his coming.

Direction I.

FIRST, Obſerve this general direction; ſee that you forget not the great difference between novices and experienced chriſtians; between the babes and thoſe of full age; between the weak and the ſtrong in grace: level them not in your eſtimation. It is not for nothing that the ſpirit of God in ſcripture maketh ſo great a difference between them, as you may read in Heb. v. 11, 12, 13, 14. and vi. 1, 2. 1 Tim. iii. 6. 1 John ii. 12, 13, 14. There are babes, ſtrong men and fathers, among chriſtians; there are ſome that are dull of hearing, and have need of milk, and are unſkilful in the word of righteouſneſs, and muſt be taught the principles: and there are others who can digeſt ſtrong meat, who by reaſon of uſe, have their ſenſes exerciſed to diſcern both good and evil. It is not for nothing that the younger are commanded reverence and ſubmiſſion to the elder, and that the paſtors and governors of the church are uſually called by the name of elders; becauſe it was ſuppoſed that the elder ſort were more experienced and wiſe; and therefore paſtors and rulers were to be choſen out of them. And why is it that children muſt ſo much honour their fathers and mothers, and muſt be governed by them? It is not merely becauſe generation giveth the parents a propriety in their children; for God would not have folly to be the governor of wiſdom, upon pretence of ſuch propriety; but it is alſo becauſe it

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muſt ordinarily be ſuppoſed, that infants are ignorant, and parents have underſtanding, and are fit to be their teachers, as having had longer time and helps to learn, and more experience to make their knowledge clear and firm. If the young and unexperienced were ordinarily as wiſe as the aged or mature, why are not children made governors of their parents, or at leaſt commanded to inſtruct and teach them, as ordinarily as parents muſt do their children? The Lord Jeſus himſelf would be ſubject to his mother and reputed father in his childhood, Luke ii. 51. Can there be a livelier conviction of the arrogance of thoſe novices, who proudly ſlight the judgments of their elders, as preſuming groundleſsly that they are wiſer than they? Yea Chriſt would not enter upon his public miniſtry or office, 'till he was about thirty years of age, Luke iii. 23. He is blind that perceiveth not in this example, a moſt notorious condemnation of the pride of thoſe that haſten to be teachers of others, before they have had time or means to learn; and that deride or vilify the judgments of the aged, who differ from their conceits, before they underſtand the things in which they are ſo confident. It was thought a good anſwer in John ix. 21. *He is of age, aſk him.* But they that are under age now think their words to be the wiſeſt, becauſe they are the boldeſt and fierceſt. The old were wont to bleſs the young, and now the young deride the old. It is the character of a turbulent people, Deut. xxviii. 50. that they regard not the perſon of the aged; that is, they reverence not their age. How many vehement commands are there in *Solomon*'s proverbs to the younger ſort, to hearken to the counſel of their parents. The contrary was the ruin of *Eli*'s ſons and the ſhame of *Samuel*'s, 1 Sam. viii. 1, 5. Was *Rehoboam* unwiſe in forſaking the counſel of the aged, and harkening to the young and raſh? and are thoſe people wiſe that in the myſteries of ſalvation will prefer the vehement paſſions of a novice before the well-ſettled judgment of the experienced, aged miniſters? I know that the old are too often ignorant, and

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but wiſdom doth not always increaſe with our age; that I know withal that children are never fit to be the rulers of the church; and that old men may be fooliſh, but young men are never wiſe enough for ſo high a work. We are not now conſidering what may fall out rarely as a wonder, but what is ordinarily to be expected. Moſt of the church's confuſions and diviſions have been cauſed by the younger ſort of Chriſtians, who are in the heat of their zeal, and the infancy of underſtanding; who have affection enough to make them drive on, but have not judgment enough to know the way. None are ſo fierce and raſh in condemning the things and perſons which they underſtand not, and in raiſing clamours againſt all that are wiſer, and ſoberer than they. If they once take a thing to be a ſin, which is no ſin, or a duty which is no duty, there is no perſon, no miniſter, no magiſtrate, who hath age, or wiſdom, or piety enough, to ſave them from the injuries of juvenile temerity, if they do not think and ſpeak, and do according to their green and raw conceits. Remember therefore to be always ſenſible of the great diſadvantages of youth, and to preſerve that reverence for experienced age, which God in nature as well as in ſcripture hath made their due. If time and labour were not neceſſary to maturity of knowledge, why do you not truſt another with your health, as well as an experienced phyſician, and with your eſtates, as well as a ſtudied lawyer? And why do not ſeamen truſt any other to govern the ſhip, as well as an experienced pilot? Do you not ſee that all men ordinarily are beſt at that, which by long ſtudy they have made their profeſſion? I know thoſe that I have now to do with, will ſay, that *Divinity is not learned by labour and men's teaching, as other ſciences and arts are; but by the teaching of the ſpirit of God; and therefore the youngeſt may have as much of it as the eldeſt.*

Anſw. There is ſome truth, and ſome falſehood, and much confuſion, in this objection. It is true that the ſaving knowledge of divinity muſt be taught by the ſpirit of God: and it is falſe, that labour and human

teaching

teaching are not the means which muſt be uſed by them who will have the teaching of the Spirit.

1. Conſider, I pray, why elſe it is, God hath ſo multiplied commands to dig for it as for ſilver, and ſearch for it as a hidden treaſure; to cry for knowledge, and lift up our voice for underſtanding; to wait at the poſts of wiſdom's doors; to ſearch the ſcriptures, and meditate in them day and night: Is not this ſuch ſtudy and labour as men uſe to get underſtanding in other profeſſions? Are not theſe the plain commands of God? And are they not then deceivers, who contradict them?

2. Is it not blaſpheming of God's ſpirit to make it the patron of men's ſloth and idleneſs, under pretence of magnifying grace? When ſo many texts command diligence, and ſlothfulneſs is ſo great a ſin? And none are ſo forward to preach as theſe ſame men that cry down men's teaching.

3. Why hath God ſettled a teaching office in his church, and commanded all to attend and hear and learn, if we are taught by the Spirit without man's help? Why were the apoſtles ſent out into all the world? And why were they commanded to teach all nations, and to teach the church all that Chriſt commanded them? And why doth he promiſe to be with them to the end of the world? But that this is the way of the Spirit's teaching, to teach thoſe firſt who are our outward teachers, and then to help us to underſtand them. And thoſe are taught of God, who are taught by thoſe who are ſent of God to be their teachers, and have the inward concurrence of his grace. Therefore remember to give due reſpect to them who have been longer in Chriſt than you, and to them who have longer ſtudied the ſcriptures, and to them that have had greater helps and experience: and do not too eaſily imagine, that thoſe who are below them in all theſe advantages, are yet above them in ſound underſtanding: though ſuch a wonder may ſometimes come to paſs.

Direction

Direction II.

OBSERVE well the ſecret and ſubtle workings of ſpiritual pride, and how deep-rooted and dangerous a ſin it is, and what ſpecial temptations to this odious ſin the younger and empty-headed Chriſtians have; that the reſiſtance of them may be your daily care.

Pride is the ſelf-idolizing ſin; the great rebel againſt God; the chief part of the devil's image; that one ſin which breaketh every commandment; the heart of the old man; the root and parent, and ſummary of all other ſin; the antichriſtian vice, which is moſt directly contrary to the life of Chriſt; the principal object of God's hatred and diſdain, and the mark of thoſe whom he delighteth to tread down; and the certain prognoſtic of dejection and abaſement, either by humbling repentance or damnation. It is called *ſpiritual pride* from the object; when men are proud of ſpiritual excellencies, real or ſuppoſed. And this is ſo much worſe than pride in beauty, apparel, riches, high places, or high birth, as the abuſe of great and excellent things is worſe than the abuſe of vanities and trifles; and as things ſpiritual are in themſelves more contrary to the nature of pride, and therefore the ſin hath the greater enormity. The common exerciſe of this religious or ſpiritual pride is firſt about knowledge, and ſecondly about our godlineſs or goodneſs. 1ſt. Pride of our underſtandings worketh thus: Firſt, a man that was formerly in darkneſs, is much affected with the new-come light, and perceiveth that he knoweth much more than he did before; and then groweth to a carnal and corrupt eſtimation of it, valuing it more as nature is pleaſed with it, than as it is ſanctified by it; delighting in knowledge for itſelf, more than for the purity, love, and heavenlineſs which it ſhould effect. Then he looketh about him on the ignorant ſort of people, who know not what he knoweth, and ſeeth how far they are below him; and he thinketh within himſelf, what a difference hath God made between me and them.

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And becauſe thankfulneſs is a duty, he obſerveth not how pride doth twiſt itſelf with it, and creeps in under the protection of its name. And how thankfulneſs and pride have the ſame expreſſions, and both of them ſay, I thank thee, O Father, that thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, and haſt revealed them to babes: I thank thee, O God, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjuſt, adulterers, or even as this publican, Luke xviii. 11. And then he is ſo taken up with the things which he knoweth, that he perceiveth not what knowledge he yet wanteth. And the deep affection which his knowledge worketh in him, or the tickling pleaſure which he hath in knowing, joined with this ignorance of his in other things, doth make him over confident of all his apprehenſions, as if every thing which he imagineth were an abſolute certainty: and ſo he wanteth that humble ſuſpicion of his own underſtanding, which a true acquaintance with his ignorance would have cauſed in him. And thus he groweth to over-value all his own conceivings, and to under-value all the opinions and reaſonings of others which are contrary to his own; and thence he proceeds to corrupt his religion with ſuch miſapprehenſions, rejects divine inſtitutions, and ſanctifies human traditions as divine dictates, and having made him a religion of his own, he confidently thinketh that it is of God. And next he valueth all men that he hath to do with, according as they are nearer or farther off from this which he accounteth the way of God; he chooſeth whom he will join with by the teſt of this religion, which his pride hath choſen. He zealouſly declaimeth againſt the oppoſers of this way, as againſt the adverſaries of truth and godlineſs, and conſequently of God himſelf. He prayeth up his opinions, and preacheth them up, and contendeth for them; and prayeth, and preacheth, and diſputeth down all that is againſt them. He laboureth to ſtrengthen the party that is for them, and to weaken that which is againſt them. And thus he divideth the kingdom and family of Chriſt; he deſtroyeth firſt the love of his brother

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and neighbour in himſelf, and then laboureth to deſtroy it in all others, by ſpeaking againſt thoſe that are not of his mind with contempt and obloquy, to repreſent them as an unlovely ſort of men; and if the intereſt of his cauſe do require it, perhaps he will next deſtroy their perſons. And yet all this is done in zeal for God, and as an acceptable ſervice to him; and they think all are neuters and lukewarm, who proſecute not the ſchiſm ſo fervently as they, and fight not againſt love with as much vehemency: yea, and in all this they are ſtill confident, that they love the brethren with a ſpecial love, and make it the mark that they are Chriſt's diſciples, and that they are paſſed from death to life, becauſe they love the perſons who are of their own opinion and way, and becauſe they love their own image, which is only ſelf-love reflected.

And thus *Pride* inſenſibly, while they perceive it not at all, doth chooſe their opinions, their religions, their parties, and make their duties and their ſins, and rule their judgments, affections, and actions; which is all but the ſame thing, which the ſcripture in one word calleth *hereſy*. And all that I have ſaid, you may find ſaid in other words in the third chapter of *James*.— And there are two things which greatly promote this ſin: The one is a conceit, that all their apprehenſions are the Spirit's dictates, or the effect of its illumination; and the works and teachings of the Spirit are not to be contradicted, or ſuſpected, but to be honoured; therefore they think it is a reſiſting of the Spirit, to reſiſt their judgment: and they are perſuaded that their apprehenſions are cauſed by the Spirit, partly becauſe they had no ſuch thing whilſt they lived in wickedneſs, but it came in either with their change, or ſhortly after. And therefore they think that the ſame light which ſhewed them their ſinful ſtate, doth ſhew them alſo all theſe principles; and partly becauſe they find themſelves as deeply affected with theſe miſapprehenſions, as with others which are ſound and right; therefore they are confident that they come from the ſame ſpirit. And eſpecially when theſe thoughts come in

upon

upon the reading of the ſcripture, or in meditation, or after earneſt prayer to God to teach them by his Spirit, and lead them into the truth, and not to ſuffer them to err; and when they find they have good ends and meanings, and a deſire to know the truth; all this perſuadeth them that it is the Spirit from whom their thoughts proceed, when yet it may be no ſuch thing.

And another much greater, and commoner cauſe of this ſelf-conceitedneſs is this: all men's underſtandings are naturally imperfect: our knowledge about natural things is ſmall and dark, much more about ſupernatural: the wiſeſt muſt ſay, *we know but in part*. And the variety of men's degrees of knowledge, joined with the difference of their education, and advantages and foregoing thoughts, do make as great a diverſity of underſtandings, as of complexions: and yet it is very hard to any man, to have a ſufficient diffidence and ſuſpicion of his miſtaken mind. For what a man knoweth, he knoweth that he knoweth. But no man that erreth, doth know that he erreth, for that is a contradiction.

And there is a religious pride of goodneſs, as well as of knowledge, which muſt yet more carefully be avoided, as being yet worſe than the former, as the thing abuſed is much better. And this worketh as ſecretly and as ſubtilly as the former. It may not only conſiſt with many complaints, and confeſſions of ſinfulneſs, weakneſs and unworthineſs, but even with doubts of ſincerity, and ſo much dejectedneſs as ſeemeth to draw near to deſperation. It is an ordinary thing to hear the ſame perſons talking in a complaining, doubting, and almoſt deſpairing manner of ſpeech, and yet to have high expectations of reſpect from others, and to be moſt proudly impatient of the leaſt undervaluing or neglect. Yea, pride will make an advantage to itſelf, of all thoſe humble confeſſions and complaints: and it is an old obſervation, that many are proud of their humility. For though it be true, as *Auſtin* ſaith, that grace is a thing that no man can uſe amiſs; the meaning is only that grace efficiently can do nothing amiſs;

(for if it do amiſs ſo far it is not grace) yet objectly all grace may be abuſed, that is, a man may make it the object of his pride, and the occaſion of many other ſins. And this religious pride of goodneſs, doth ordinarily work under the pretext of thankfulneſs to God for his grace, and zeal for holineſs: but it may be known by this, that it always tendeth to lift us up, and to the diminiſhing of love to others, and the contempt of the weak, and the cenſuring of our brethren, and the diviſions and diſturbance of the church of God. They are lamentable effects which this pride produceth in the church, and all ſocieties where it cometh. It maketh all men's goodneſs ſeem little, except our own: it cauſeth the people to undervalue their paſtors, and turneth compaſſion of men's weakneſs into a ſour contempt: it ſetteth a man, in his own conceit, ſo near to God, that he looketh down on other men as earthly animals in compariſon of himſelf. It maketh new terms of church communion, and teacheth men to make narrower the door of the church, than God hath made it. It cauſeth men to deny and villify God's grace, in thoſe that anſwer not their expectations: and to think that the church is not worthy of their communion: and to think that none are ſo fit as they, to be the reformers of the church and of the world. I entreat thoſe who are in danger of this pernicious ſin, to think with themſelves, 1. What a heinous crime and folly it is for one that but lately was a child of the devil, and a ſink of ſin, to be proud ſo quickly of his goodneſs: and for one that ſo lately was groaning and weeping with a broken heart, for a ſinful life, to be already puffed up with the conceits of godlineſs. And for one who daily maketh confeſſion to God, of a ſinful heart, and a faulty life, and of great unworthineſs, to contradict all this by an overvaluing of his own piety; and what an odious ſelf-contradiction it is, to make yourſelf like the devil in pride, becauſe you think you are like God in holineſs.

2. Conſider that the more you are proud of your goodneſs, the leſs you have to be proud of: if this ſin be

be predominant, it is certain that you have no saving grace at all. And what an odious thing and miserable case is it, to be proud of holiness, when you are unholy; and to be damned both for the want of it, and for being proud of it: that a man should be proud of that, for want of which he must suffer the fire of hell! But if your pride be not predominant, yet it is certain that in what measure so ever you have this pride, in that measure you are destitute of grace, for true grace and pride are as contrary as life and death. 3. And study well the meaning of all these scriptures, (for you shall not say that I misinterpret them to you) why was it that Christ mentioneth the parable of the Pharisee and the publican? One thanking God that he was not so bad as others, and the other thinking himself unworthy to look up to heaven, Luke xviii. 10, 11, &c. Why did he give us the parable of the prodigal who confessed that he was unworthy to be called a son; and of his elder brother who swelled with envy at his entertainment? Why was it that Christ seemed not strict enough to the Pharisees, in keeping the Sabbath, nor in his diet, nor in his company, but they called him a gluttonous person, and a wine bibber, and a friend of publicans and sinners? Was it not because their pride and superstition made them think too highly of their own religiousness? And to make sins and duties which God never made, and then to condemn the innocent for want of this human religiousness? What was the sin condemned in Isai. lxv. 5. which says, *Stand by thyself; come not near to me, for I am holier than thou?* What meaneth that command in Phil. ii. 3. *Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves?* Read this verse over upon your knees, and beg of God to write it on your hearts; and join with it, Rom. xii. 10. *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another,* (that is, before yourselves). But especially read and study James iii.—In a word, if God would cure the church of religious pride, the pride of wisdom, and the pride of piety and goodness,

goodneſs, the church would have fewer hereſies and contentions, and have much more peace, and much more true wiſdom and goodneſs in itſelf.

Direction III.

OVERVALUE not the common gift of utterance, nor a high profeſſion, as if the preſence or abſence of either of them did prove the preſence or abſence of grace.

Yet neither of theſe muſt be undervalued, nor accounted needleſs, uſeleſs things. But the overvaluing them hath cauſed great diſtempers in the minds and affections, and communion and practice, of many very well-meaning Chriſtians. When God had firſt brought me from among the more ignorant ſort of people, and when I firſt heard religious perſons pray without forms, and ſpeak affectionately and ſeriouſly of ſpiritual and heavenly things, I thought verily that they were all undoubted ſaints; and the ſudden apprehenſion of the difference of their gifts and ſpeech from others, made me think confidently that the one ſort had the mark of God upon them, and the other had nothing almoſt of God at all: till ere long many of thoſe whom I ſo much honoured, began to diſcover an unſcriptural diſpoſition. But the experience of this kingdom theſe twenty-ſix years, hath done ſo much to convince the world what crimes may ſtand with high profeſſions, that I know not that I ever met with the man that would deny it: ſeeing every ſect caſteth it upon all the reſt, however ſome of them would juſtify themſelves. But I greatly fear, leſt the generation which is now ſpringing up, and knew not thoſe men, nor their miſcarriages, will loſe the benefit of theſe dreadful warnings, and ſcarce believe what high profeſſors did prove the proudeſt overturners of all government; and reſiſters and deſpiſers of miniſtry and holy order in the churches, and the moſt railing Quakers, and the moſt filthy and blaſpheming ranters; to warn all the world to take heed of being proud of ſuperficial gifts

gifts and high profeſſions ; and that he that ſtandeth in his own conceit, ſhould take heed leſt he fall.

When gifts of utterance in prayer or talking are thus overvalued, and high profeſſions are taken to have more in them than they have, men preſently model their affections, and then the church, according to their miſconceivings ; and a talkative perſon, who by company and uſe hath got more of theſe gifts than better Chriſtians, ſhall be extolled and admired, when many a humble upright ſoul, that wanteth ſuch utterance, ſhall be ſaid to be no profeſſor, and ſo to be unworthy of the communion of ſaints. Miſtake me not ; I know that though profeſſion may be without ſincerity, yet ſincerity cannot be without ſome profeſſion, when there is opportunity to make it : and I know that grace is a vital principle, and like fire which will work, and ſeek a vent if you would reſtrain it ; and that gifts of utterance are great mercies of God, for the edification of the church. But here lieth your unhappy error in this caſe, you take a moderate profeſſion of Chriſtianity to be no profeſſion at all, becauſe there is wanting a profeſſion of greater zeal and forwardneſs : whereas you ſhould make proper allowance for conſtitutions and circumſtances.

In the place where I exerciſed my miniſtry, I found ſome give me a ſatisfying evidence in their laſt ſickneſs, that they had long lived a truly godly life ; who were never noted by their neighbours for any extraordinary zeal at all. If you aſk me how can it ſtand with grace to be ſo much hid ? I anſwer, they made a profeſſion of chriſtianity ; they uſually attended the public worſhip ; they lived blameleſsly in their places ; but they were of ſilent, retired diſpoſitions, and were inferiors, who by their ſuperiors were reſtrained from private meetings, and ſome converſe with more zealous perſons, which they deſired. And for aught you know, there may be very many ſuch, who muſt not be rejected as no profeſſors, without a particular accuſation and proof, unleſs you would be uſed in the like kind yourſelves.

Direction IV.

AFFECT not to be made eminent and conſpicuous in holineſs, by ſtanding at a further diſtance from theſe lower profeſſors, than God would have you. It is the loathſome ſcab of the Romiſh church, that they who will be taken for religious muſt go into a monaſtery of friars and nuns, and ſeparate themſelves from the reſt of Chriſtians as worldly, ſecular people, that ſo their religion may be a noted thing, and they may be ſet up in their ſingularity as public ſpectacles for the world to admire; though perhaps they come thither but under the gripes of conſcience, to expiate the guilt of whoredom, murder, or ſome notorious ſins, which the contemned ſeculars never committed.

Many a one who perceiveth how childiſh a thing it is, to ſet out one's ſelf to be obſerved for fine clothes, or for bodily comelineſs, or for high entertainments, curioſities, houſes, lands, or ſuch vanities, doth yet think that it is an excellent thing to be honoured by men, eſpecially by the wiſeſt and the beſt, as a perſon of wiſdom, and piety, and goodneſs. And indeed it is the trueſt and higheſt honour to be wiſe and good; and it is exceeding natural to man to deſire honour, and it is lawful to have a religious regard to our honour. And this being ſo, how eaſy is it for pride to take this advantage, and to go a little farther, while we think we go but thus far and keep within our bounds.

Direction V.

SEARCH the ſcripture with diligence and prayer. Many are very ſenſible of the need of ſpirituality and ſerioufneſs in religion, and of the evil of hypocritical formality and imagery, and of uſurpation of the prerogatives of Chriſt, and of the plague of perſecuting pride and cruelty, who yet have little ſenſe at all of the good of unity, and of the miſchiefs of diviſions in the church. Yea, many are ſo careful to be found exact in their obedience to God, that they build very much,

much, for duties and againſt ſins, upon dark and very far-fetched conſequences, and upon a few obſcure and doubtful paſſages in ſcripture, when there is no expreſs words, or clear text at all, to bear them out: and doubtleſs the darkeſt intimations of the will of God muſt not be diſregarded. But on the other ſide, we cannot bring them to lay to heart ſome duties and ſins, which are over and over an hundred times, and that with vehemency expreſt, and argued in the plaineſt words.

And becauſe all chriſtians pretend to ſubmit to the word of God, I will try whether it be not thus with you in the preſent caſe, and will cite many plain expreſſions of ſcripture, for chriſtian unity and concord, that you may either better perceive your duty, or plainly ſhew your great partiality.

Zech. iv. 9. Ezek. xxxiv. 23. Ezek. xxxvii. 22. 24. Jerem. xxxii. 39. Ezek. xi. 19. John xxi. 22. John xi. 52. Acts i. 14. chap. ii. 1. Acts iv. 24, 32. Acts v. 12. Acts xv. 25. 2 Cor. xi. 2. Eph. iv. 1. ver. 12. 13. 1 Cor. xii. 3, 12, 13, ver. 22, 23, ver. 15. 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5. ver. 13. 1 Cor. i. 10. ver. 12, 13. chap. iii. 15. chap. iii. 3, 4. Rom xiv. 1. ver. 3. ver. 10. ver. 13, 14. ver. 17. chap. xv. 1, 2. ver. 5, 6. chap. 16, 17, 18. Acts xx. 30. John xiii. 35. 1 Cor. xi. 17, 18. Matt. xiii. 29, 30, 41. ver. 47. Matt. xxii. 9, 10. Luke xiv. Gal. vi. 1. Phil. i. 15, 16. Phil. ii. 1, 2, 3. 14. chap. iii. 15, 16. 1 Theſ. v. 12, 13. Tit. iii. 10. James iii. 1, 2, 13, &c. Matt. xii. 25.

I have cited ſo many texts againſt diviſion and for the unity of the church and concord of chriſtians, as one would think the very hearing of them, without expoſition or argumentation, ſhould utterly mortify all inclinations to diviſions and hard cenſures, in all true believers: yea, ſo many texts as I am perſuaded many that moſt need them, will think it tedious to look for and to read them over. And yet I have cauſe to fear, leſt many ſuch will feel as little of the ſenſe, and authority of them, as if there were no ſuch words in the ſcripture, and none of this had been ſet before them.

Out-

Out of all theſe you may gather theſe reaſons of the neceſſity of unity, and of the evil of ſchiſm or diviſion. It is one end and happineſs which we all expect: and one heaven that we muſt meet and live in forever (ſo many as are ſincere in the faith which we profeſs:) and in heaven we ſhall have one mind and heart, and one employment in the love and praiſe of our Creator and Redeemer, and one felicitating fruition of his glory for evermore. Therefore he that ſeeth not the neceſſity of unity, knoweth not the nature of the church, or faith, or true religion.

An army is ſtronger than a man: and a kingdom than a ſingle perſon: a flame will burn more ſtrongly than a ſpark; and the waves of the ocean are more forcible than a ſingle drop: a threefold cord is not eaſily broken: therefore it is that commonwealths do ſeek to ſtrengthen themſelves by confederacies with other ſtates. The church is likened to an army with banners; both for their numbers, their concord, and their order. And therefore Chriſt ſaith, that a kingdom divided cannot ſtand. Union is the church's ſtrength: and what good ſoever they may pretend, dividers are certainly the weakeners and deſtroyers of the church: and as thoſe means which beſt corroborate the body and fortify the ſpirits, do beſt cure many particular diſeaſes which no means would cure, whilſt nature is debilitated: ſo are the church's diſeaſes beſt cured by uniting, fortifying remedies, which will be increaſed by a dividing way of reformation: dividing is wounding, and uniting is the cloſing of the wound. There is no good work but Satan is a pretender to it, when he purpoſeth to deſtroy it: he reſiſteth light as an angel of light; and his miniſters hinder righteouſneſs, as pretended miniſters of righteouſneſs: and he will be a zealous reformer, when he would hinder reformation. And this is the mark of Satan's way of reformation: he doth it by dividing the church of Chriſt, and teaching Chriſtians to avoid each other: and to that end he zealouſſly aggravateth the faults of every party to the reſt; that they may have odious thoughts of one another;

other; and Chriſtian love may be turned into averſion: as in the plague time every one is afraid of the breath and company of his neighbour, and they that were wont to aſſemble, and converſe with peace and pleaſure, do timorouſly ſhun the preſence of each other, becauſe they know that it is an infectious time, and they are uncertain who is free: even ſo doth Satan break the ſocieties and converſe of Chriſtians, by making them believe that there is ſome dangerous infection, which as they love their ſouls, they muſt avoid. And he deſtroyeth your love to one another, by pretending love for yourſelves: O how careful will he be for your ſouls! When the Devil would undo you, he will do it as your ſaviour: and when his meaning is to ſave you from heaven, and from Chriſt, and from his ſaving grace, and from union and communion with his church, and from the impartial love of one another, he takes on him that he is ſaving you only from ſin, and from church corruptions: or rather that it is Chriſt and not he that giveth you counſel: and he can do much in imitating Chriſt, in the manner of his ſuggeſtions, to make you believe that it is Chriſt indeed. Perhaps his counſel ſhall come in the midſt of a *fervent prayer*, or preſently after it, to make you believe that it is an undoubted anſwer of your prayers: and oftentimes his impulſes are vehement, and much affecting, to make you think that it is ſomething above nature: and the pious pretence will much perſuade you to think that ſure this can never come from an evil ſpirit. But if you had well ſtudied 2 Cor. xi. 13, 14, 15. Gal. i. 8. Luke ix. 55. 1 John. iv 1, 2. 2 Theſ. ii. 2. you might be wiſer, and be ſaved from this deceit. I will not recite the words, becauſe I would have you turn to them, and ſeriouſly ſtudy them.

Remember alſo, that the unity of Chriſtians is their peace and eaſe, as well as their ſtrength and ſafety. Pſalm cxxxiii. 1. *Behold, how good and pleaſant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity!*

As the amity and converſe with friends is pleaſant,

and the concord of families is their quietneſs and eaſe; ſo it is as to that amity and concord which is the bond of church ſociety: and the diviſions and diſcord of Chriſtians is their mutual pain and trouble. Do you not feel your minds diſturbed by it? Do you not ſee the church diſcompoſed by it? The itch of contention doth ordinarily make it pleaſant for the time, to ſcratch by zealous wranglings and diſputes for their ſeveral opinions, till the blood be ready to follow: but the ſmart and ſcab doth uſe to convince them of their folly. But if they will go more than ſkin deep, they may need a ſurgeon. Children will claw themſelves; but it is madmen that will wound themſelves. The hurt which we get in the Chriſtian warfare, by mortifying the fleſh, or by the perſecution of the malignant enemy, is tenderly healed by the hand of Chriſt, and uſually furthereth our inward peace. But if we will hurt and wound ourſelves, what pity or comfort can we expect?

Conſider alſo that the unity and concord of believers is their honour, and their diviſions and diſcord are their ſhame: and conſequently the honour or diſhonour of Chriſt, and the goſpel, and religion, is much concerned in it. Agreement among chriſtians telleth the world, that they have a certainty of the faith which they profeſs, and that it is powerful and not ineffectual, and that it is of a healing nature, and tendeth to the felicity of the world. But diviſions and diſcords among chriſtians perſuade unbelievers, that there is no certainty in their belief: or that it is of a vexatious and deſtructive tendency; or at beſt that all its power is too weak to overcome the malignity, which it pretendeth to reſiſt. Where did you ever ſee chriſtians live in undivided unity, undiſturbed peace, and unfeigned love, but the very infidels and ungodly round about them, did reverence them and their religion for it? And where did you ever ſee chriſtians divided, unpeaceable and bitter againſt each other, but it made them and their profeſſion a ſcorn to the unbelieving

unbelieving and ungodly world? And whilſt they deſpiſe and vilify one another, they teach the wicked to deſpiſe and vilify them all.

Peace and concord are amiable even to nature: and you can ſcarce take a more effectual means, to win the world to the love of holineſs, than by ſhewing them that holineſs doth make you unfeigned and fervent in the love of one another. 1 Pet. i. 22. Nor can you deviſe how to drive men more effectually from Chriſt, and to damn their ſouls, than to repreſent chriſtians to them like a company of madmen, that are tearing out the throats of one another. How can you think that the unbelievers and ungodly ſhould think well of them, that all ſpeak ſo ill of one another?

External unity and peaceable church communion doth greatly cheriſh our internal unity of love: and church diviſions do cheriſh wrath and malice, and all the works of the fleſh deſcribed by Paul, Gal. v. 21, 22, 23. I pray you conſider how he deſcribeth the fleſhly and ſpiritual man, ver. 14, 15. *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not conſumed one of another. I ſay then, walk in the Spirit, and ye ſhall not fulfil the luſts of the fleſh: for the fleſh luſteth againſt the Spirit, &c. Now the works of the fleſh are manifeſt, adultery, enmities or hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, ſtrife, ſeditions,* (or as it may be read diviſions or factions) *hereſies, envyings, murders, &c. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs, faith, meekneſs, temperance: againſt ſuch there is no law. And they that are Chriſt's have crucified the fleſh, with the affections and luſts. If we live in the ſpirit, let us alſo walk in the ſpirit; let us not be deſirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.*

Objec. O but thoſe I complain of are guilty of this, that, and the other fault.

Anſw. Chap. vi. 1. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are ſpiritual reſtore ſuch a one in the ſpirit of meekneſs, conſidering thyſelf leſt thou alſo be tempted.* Inſtead of cenſorious diſdain and ſeparation, *bear ye one another's*

another's burthen, and ſo fulfil the law of Chriſt: which you think you fulfil by your unwarrantable conduct, while you are but fulfilling your fleſhly paſſions. When once parties are engaged by their opinions, in fierce diſputings, the fleſh and Satan will be working in them againſt all that is holy, ſweet and ſafe. When uniting chriſtians are provoking one another to love and to good works, and minding each other of their heavenly cohabitation, and harmonious praiſe; and are delighting God and man by the melody of their concord; the contentious zealots are preaching down love, and preaching up hatred, and making thoſe that differ from them ſeem an odious people not to be borne with. James iii. 1, &c. *My brethren, be not many teaching maſters,* (for this is the word) *knowing that we ſhall receive the greater condemnation: for in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the ſame is a perfect man;* (that is, if you will ſhew that you are perfect, and better yourſelves than thoſe whom you account ſo bad, ſee that your foul, backbiting, reviling, cenſorious, contentious tongues, do not prove the contrary.) Ver. 13. *Who is a wiſe man and endued with knowledge among you, let him ſhow out of a good converſation, his works with meekneſs of wiſdom:* (that is, let him that will be thought more knowing and religious than his neighbours, be ſo much more blameleſs and meek to all men, and excel in good works,) v. 14. *But if you have a bitter zeal,* (for ſo is the Greek word) *and ſtrife in your hearts, glory not,* (in ſuch a zeal, or in your greater knowledge) *and lie not againſt the truth,* 15. *this wiſdom deſcendeth not from above,* (as you imagine who father it on God's word and ſpirit) *but is earthly, ſenſual or natural, and deviliſh* (O doleful miſtake, that the world, the fleſh and the devil, ſhould prove the cauſe of that conceited ſpiritual knowledge and excellency, which they thought had been the inſpiration of the Spirit!) ver. 16. *for where zeal and ſtrife is* (that is a ſtriving contentious zeal againſt brethren) *there is confuſion* (or tumult and unquietneſs) *and every evil work.* O lamentable reformers, that ſet up every evil work while they ſeem

zealous

zealous againſt evil!) ver. 17. *But the wiſdom that is from above, is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle, and eaſy to be entreated; full of mercy and good fruits; without partiality* (or wrangling) *and without hypocriſy. And the fruit of righteouſneſs is ſown in peace, of them that make peace;* when peace breakers that ſow contention, ſhall reap the fruit of unrighteouſneſs, though they call their way by the moſt religious names.

Reſolve with *Auſtin*, I will not be the chaff, and yet I will not go out of the floor, though the chaff be there. Never give over your juſt deſire and endeavour of reformation; and yet as long as poſſibly you can avoid it, forſake not thoſe who, as you ſuppoſe, are in ſome things wrong. As *Paul* ſaid to them that were ready to forſake a ſea-wrecked veſſel, *If they abide not in the ſhip, ye cannot be ſaved:* many a one by unlawful flying and ſhifting for his own greater peace and ſafety, doth much more hazard his own and others. Many weak Chriſtians marking thoſe texts which bid us avoid a man that is an heretic, and have no company with diſorderly walkers, and not to eat with flagitious perſons, do not ſufficiently mark their ſenſe, but take them as if they called us to ſeparate from the church, with which theſe perſons do communicate. Whereas if you mark all the texts in the goſpel, you ſhall find that all the ſeparation which is commanded in ſuch caſes, (beſides our ſeparation from the infidels, or idolatrous world, or antichriſtian and heretical confederacies) is but one of theſe two ſorts; firſt, either that the church caſt out the impenitent ſinner by the power of the keys. Secondly, or that private men avoid all private familiarity with them. And both theſe we would promote, and no way hinder.

But that the private members ſhould ſeparate from the church, becauſe ſuch perſons are not caſt out of it, ſhew me one text to prove it, if you can.

Let us here peruſe the texts that ſpeak of our withdrawing from the wicked: 1 Cor. v. is expreſsly written to the whole church, as obliged *to put away the inceſtuous perſon from among them, and ſo not to eat with*

ſuch offenders. So is that in 2 Theſ. iii. and that in Tit. iii. 10. *A man that is an heretic, after the firſt and ſecond admonition, avoid:* Unleſs it be an heretic that hath already ſeparated himſelf from our communion; and then it can be but private familiarity which we are further to avoid. In brief, there is no other place of ſcripture, that I know of, which commandeth any more. The apoſtle never ſpake a ſyllable to any one Chriſtian, to ſeparate from any one of all thoſe churches: which we cannot imagine that the Holy Ghoſt would have wholly omitted, if it had been the will of God. Here are two things which I deſire you to obſerve; Firſt, what is Chriſt's appointed way, for removing members from the communion of the church. Secondly, how great a ſin it is to remove them by a contrary and arbitrary way of our own preſumptuous invention.

Firſt. It is ſuppoſed that the perſon is not a profeſſed *Apoſtate*: for there needeth no *caſting out* of ſuch. He that turneth *Turk* or *Heathen*, or openly renounceth Chriſtianity, or ceaſeth the profeſſion of it, doth go out of the church himſelf, and needeth not be *caſt* out. Unleſs it be a tyrant who will come to the communion in ſcorn, while he profeſſeth but to ſhew his lawleſs will. He that ſeeketh the communion of the church in ſobriety, thereby profeſſeth himſelf a Chriſtian; and Chriſt's way of rejecting ſuch is plainly deſcribed in the goſpel, Matt. xviii. 15, 16. Tit. iii. 10. 1 Cor. v. 7, 11—13.

By all this it is plain that the church muſt exerciſe a regular courſe of juſtice, with every perſon that it ſhall reject: He muſt firſt be told *privately* of his fault, and then before two or three; (unleſs, at leaſt, the open notoriety make the private admonition needleſs.) And then it muſt be told the church: and the church muſt with compaſſion, tenderneſs and patience, and yet with the authority of the Lord Jeſus, and the powerful evidence of truth, convince him and perſuade him to repent; and he muſt not be rejected,

till

till after all this, he obſtinately refuſe to hear the church, that is, to repent, as they exhort him.

Note alſo, that no private perſon may expect that any offender be caſt out, either becauſe his ſin is known to him, or becauſe he is commonly famed to be guilty, till the thing be proved by ſufficient witneſs. Yea, the admonition given him muſt be proved, as well as the fault which he committed. Yea, if all the town do know him to be guilty, and witneſs prove that he hath been privately admoniſhed, he may not be rejected, till he be heard *ſpeak for himſelf*, and till he refuſe alſo the regular admonition.

This is Chriſt's order, whoſe *wiſdom*, and *mercy*, and *authority* are ſuch, as may well cauſe us to take his way as beſt. And yet the ignorance or raſhneſs of many profeſſors is ſuch, that they would have all this order of Chriſt overturned: and ſome of them muſt have ſuch a perſon kept away and rejected, before ever they have admoniſhed them, or exhorted them to repentance, or proved that any one elſe hath done it; much more befor ethey have told the miniſter, or proved that he hath neglected the miniſter's admonition.

The ſinfulneſs of unchurching perſons, without Chriſt's way of regular proceſs, conſiſteth in all theſe following parts:

1. It is a caſting off the laws of the great law-giver of the church, and ſo a contempt of his authority, wiſdom and goodneſs; and a making of ourſelves *greater*, or *wiſer*, or *holier* than he.

2. It is groſs injuſtice, to deprive men of ſo great privileges without any ſufficient proof of their forfeiture.

3. And it is an aggravated crime in them, that ſo much cry down *church-tyranny* in others, to be thus notoriouſly guilty of it themſelves: what greater injuſtice and tyranny can there be, than that men's chriſtianity and church rights, ſhall be judged null, upon the cenſures and rumours of ſuſpicious men, without any juſt proof or lawful trial? That it ſhall be in the power of every one who hath uncharitableneſs enough to think

evil

evil of his neighbours, or to believe reports againſt their innocency, to caſt them out of the family of God, and to unchriſtian and unchurch men arbitrarily at their pleaſure. That any man that is but unconſcionable enough to ſay, "They are *ignorant* or *prophane*," ſhall expect to have his neighbours excommunicated.

4. It maketh all churches to be lubricous and uncertain ſhadows, when a cenſorious perſon may unchurch them at his pleaſure. What you ſay of others, another may ſay of you, and as juſtly expect to be believed.

5. It unavoidably bringeth in incurable *diviſions*; for there is no certain rule of juſtice with ſuch perſons; and therefore they know not who are to be received to their communion, and who not. And the ſame man that one will think ought to be rejected and kept out, another will think is to be received.

And let it be well obſerved, the power of baptizing is the power *of the keys* for *reception into* the church. The private members have not the power of *baptizing*, nor were the paſtors ever appointed to do it by their advice, conſent or vote. Therefore, the private members have not the power of the keys for admiſſion; and it is moſt apparent in the goſpel that the keys for *admiſſion* and for *excluſion* are given into the ſame hands, and not one to the miniſters and another to the flock: therefore, the people that have not the firſt, have not the latter. For full proof of this, obſerve the meaning of theſe texts: Iſa. xxii. 22. Iſa. ix. 6. Matt. xvi. 19. Matt. xviii. 18. John xx. 23. Matt. xxviii. 19. John xx. 21. Acts i. 16, 17. Acts xx. 28. Rom. i. 1. 1 Cor. iv. 1. Acts xiv. 23. Tit. i. 3, 7. 1 Tim. iii. 5. 1 Tim. v. 17. 1 Pet. v. 2. Heb. xiii. 7, 17, 24. 1 Theſ. v. 12, 13. Read theſe with judgment, and then believe if you can, that the power of the keys or government is in the people. Shew us what text doth give them that power? And where the ſcripture calleth them to exerciſe it by votes? Or where God requireth ability in them for church government? Or where he calleth them to leave their callings and attend this work? When thoſe that muſt perform it, he ſeparateth to it

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as by office, and calleth to *give themſelves wholly* thereto, 1 Tim. iv. 15, 16. Tell us when the people were authorized to baptize? Or to rule the church, that is themſelves?

Obj. In Mat. xviii. 15. *Tell the church; if he hear not the church*, &c. Anſ. Many expoſitors think that by the *church there* is meant the miniſters only, by this reaſon, The church that muſt *teach* muſt be *heard;* the church that muſt be *heard* muſt be *told:* But that is only the paſtors and not the people: *Ergo*——But ſuppoſe I grant you, that the word [*church*] there ſignifieth the whole congregation, (as Dr. Taylor ſayeth in his ſecond diſſuaſive) yet it is an organized body only. And ſo the office is to be performed only by the organical part, and not by any of the reſt. When I ſay to a man [*hear me*], I do not mean that he ſhould hear me with his eyes, but only with his ears: And when I bid him *ſee* or *read*, I bid him not to do it with his *ears*, but with his *eyes*. Nor do the eyes receive this power from the feet or hands, but immediately from the head: Though if they were ſeparated from the body, they could not retain it. Obj. 1 Cor. v. *Paul* biddeth all the church *to put from among them that wicked perſon*. Anſ. Note, that *Paul* paſſed the ſentence firſt himſelf, [*I have judged as if I were preſent* (not that *you deliver*, but) to deliver ſuch an one to Satan] and therefore doth this himſelf, *In the name of the Lord Jeſus*, and ſuppoſeth himſelf *among them in ſpirit and power*, when they do it [*and my ſpirit with the power of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*] 2. And I have ſaid, he ſpeaketh to an organized church, which had two parts, and accordingly two works to do: the *ruling* part was to *put away the offender* by *judgment*, or *ſentence;* and the people were all *to put him away*, by actual *ſhunning* his communion; which is but the obeying that ſentence. If the king ſend to a corporation to execute any law, he meaneth not that *all perſons* muſt do it in the like manner; but the magiſtrates by command, and the people by obeying them, and executing their commands. If I deſire a man to tranſcribe me a book and

bring it me; I mean not that every part of him ſhall herein have the ſame office: but that he *read* it only with his *eyes*, and underſtand it with his *reaſon*, and tranſcribe it with his *hand*, and travel with his *feet*. The paſtors only excommunicate by judgment or ſentence, and the people by obedient execution.

Further you are not at all bound *to know* what the ſpirtual ſtate of any man is, as he is to join in church-communion with you, but upon your *paſtors truſt* and *word*. Whether their underſtanding be ſufficient at their admittance, you are not any where called to try: but the paſtor is: and if he have admitted them, you are to reſt in his judgment (unleſs you would undertake the office yourſelf:) whether their profeſſion of faith and repentance be ſerious and credible, you are not called to try and judge: but if your paſtor have admitted them, he hath numbered them with the viſible church: and it is the *credibility* of the *paſtor* that you have to conſider; and by him you muſt judge of the credibility of the profeſſor, and not immediately by your own trial. Who are the perſons that you ſhall meet at a ſacrament or in public communion, you are not at all required to try; and if you never ſaw them before, or heard them ſpeak, you may perform your duty nevertheleſs: indeed if as a *neighbour* you are called to inſtruct, or counſel, or comfort them, you muſt do it: But there may be five thouſand in one church with you, whoſe names or faces you are not bound to know; but to reſt in the knowledge of them to whom the keys are committed, who according to their office, take them in.

Obj. *But what if they are notoriouſly wicked? muſt I be blind?*

Anſw. No: you muſt do your beſt by neighbourly watchfulneſs and help (though not by paſtoral government) to reform all about you, to whom you are able to do good. And if you know them to be ſo bad, you muſt privately admoniſh them, as is proved: and then if they hear not, tell the miniſter: but if you ſee a man in the church at the ſacrament, or a thouſand men,

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who are unreformed, and you know it not, you have no reaſon to avoid the communion of ſuch: and if there be a thouſand in the church whoſe caſe you are ſtrangers to, this may be no ſin of yours; and ſhould be no impediment of your communion.

Obj. *But will it not be my ſin, if I communicate with ſuch as I know to be wicked; when a little leaven leaveneth the lump?*

Anſw. It will be your ſin if you obey not Chriſt Mat. xviii. 15. in admoniſhing them; and ſo if it be through you that they are not removed. But otherwiſe if they be there without your fault, it is no more your ſin to communicate with ſuch men, than it is to live and converſe with fellow ſervants that are wicked; when it is not *you*, but your *maſter* that hath the choice of them. And the *leavening* of the *lump*, of which the text ſpeaketh, is the tempting of others to the like ſin; and not that the innocent ſhall be held guilty. Chriſt's outward diſcipline is agreeable to his inward. As thoſe that *come to him by faith*, he will in no wiſe caſt out or reject; ſo thoſe that come to him by *profeſſion* of faith, he will not have his miniſters in any wiſe reject. And *coming to Chriſt* when he was perſonally on earth, did ſignify the following of him, as well as believing in him: juſt ſo far as men will come, ſo far they ſhall be received by Chriſt: if they will come but *towards* him, he will not put them back. If they will come but to his *viſible church* by a dead profeſſion, he would not have his miniſters repulſe them as long as their lives are moral. The outward privileges of the viſible church which they come to, they ſhall poſſeſs. If they will come over to the church of the regenerate, they ſhall be ſaved. But wherever they ſtop, it ſhall be their own doing. Many came to Chriſt when he was on earth, whom he never repulſed, though he was marvelled at and grudged at for entertaining them. Some came ſo far as to own his name, and did miracles by it, that yet did not follow him: whom the apoſtles would have hindered, but Chriſt reproved them, Mark ix. 38. Luke ix. 49. Some came only to receive

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a cure of their diſeaſes from him, whom his diſciples ſometimes repulſed, but ſo did not he: when little children were brought to him, his diſciples rebuked them that brought them, as thinking them unfit for his reception; but Chriſt rebuked them for their forbidding of ſuch gueſts. When he eat and drank with publicans and ſinners, and when he received a kindneſs from a woman that had been a great ſinner, the Phariſees cenſured him therefore, as ungodly: But yet he would not abate his clemency. And though *Simon Magus* would not come out of the gall of bitterneſs and bond of iniquity, yet was he not kept out of the viſible church, when he profeſſed to believe and deſired baptiſm.

Indeed, if men will not come ſo far as to the *profeſſion of true faith or repentance*, they are not to be received into the church, becauſe the church is a ſociety of *ſuch profeſſors*; and if they will not come, they cannot be received. But if Chriſtians had well ſtudied the compaſſions of a Saviour, and the tenor of his goſpel, and his practice upon earth, and inſtead of a ſurly flying from their neighbours, and groundleſs cenſuring them, were poſſeſſed themſelves with that love and tenderneſs, which is the evangelical temper and the image of their Lord, it would put an end to many diviſions, and bring us nearer the truth and one another.

It is far from the mind of Chriſt, that no difference ſhould be made between the *holy* and *prophane*, the precious and the vile; or that ſerious piety ſhould be ſuppreſſed or diſcouraged; or faithful preachers hindered from promoting it, or ignorant, graceleſs miniſters countenanced, under pretence of *peace* or *order*. The deſign of Chriſt was not like Mahomet's, to get himſelf an earthly kingdom, and numerous followers merely to cry up his name; and therefore he will not indulge men in their ſins, nor abate or alter the conditions of the covenant to win diſciples. He will have his miniſters deal plainly with all to whom they preach, and let them know, that without *ſelf-denial* and *forſaking all* (in eſtimation and reſolution), and a willing exchange

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of earth for heaven, they cannot be his true disciples; nor without a *professt consent* to thus much, they cannot be his *visible professt* disciples; but all that will not repent must perish. His ministers also must impartially exercise the keys which he hath committed to their trust, and must not fear the faces of men, who at most are able but to kill the body, Luke xii. 4. They must discern between the righteous and the wicked; and draw all scandalous sinners to repentance, or else exclude them from the communion of the saints, that the world may see that Christ is no friend to profane persons, or sensual fleshly brutes. If you meet a profane person at the Lord's table, it is your own fault or the pastor's: but if you keep company needlessly with such, or marry such, it is your own fault altogether. If the pastor do not excommunicate them, you may choose not to be familiar with them: though you meet them at the church and pray with them; you need not meet them at other places, and drink with them. Though you may not with a few of the most godly separate from the public communion of all the rest; yet you may keep a more intimate familiarity with those few than with all the rest. And if you will consider, this is all that is necessary to your own duty, and that which is best for your own edification. Keep thus to a strictness within the bounds of your own place and calling, and God will bless you in such a strictness.

The teachings, commands, exhortations and reproofs of God, are directed to the *will* of man: and the promises and threatenings, mercies and judgments, are used to move and change the will: and in the tenor of his laws and covenants, Christ hath set life and death before men, and put their *happiness* in their own choice; and no man shall have better or worse than he made choice of: that is, none shall be either happy or miserable, but as they did *choose* or *refuse* the causes of happiness or misery. And the reason of this is, because natural free will was a part of the *natural image* of God on *Adam;* and it is as natural to a man to be a *free agent*, as to be reasonable. And God will

will govern *man* as *man*, agreeably to his nature. Therefore do not wonder if church-privileges are principally left to men's own wills or choice, when their ſalvation is left to it. And for us to grudge at this order of God, is but to quarrel at wiſdom and goodneſs, and to correct God's order by our diſorder. The man that came in without a wedding-garment, is blamed, and bound hand and foot, and puniſhed: but the miniſter that called him in, and admitted him, is not blamed; becauſe he knew not his hypocriſy, but did as he was bidden: he went to the high ways and hedges, and compelled them by importunity to come in, that the houſe might be filled. Nor were any that came in with him blamed, for having communion with ſuch. For they were in their places, and did as they were exhorted to do. And ſo will it be in the caſe that is before us.

Direction VI.

BEWARE of being governed by YOUR PASSIONS. We are ſeldom more miſtaken in juſtifying ourſelves than in our paſſions; and when our *paſſions* are *religious*, the miſtake is both moſt eaſy and moſt perilous: Eaſy, becauſe we are apt to be moſt confident, and not ſuſpect them, the matter ſeeming ſo great and good about which they are exerciſed: And perilous, becauſe the greatneſs and goodneſs of the matter doth make the error the greater and the worſe. I have ſhewed before how eaſy it is to think, that our religious paſſions are all the works of the Spirit of God: for we are apt to eſtimate them by the depth and earneſtneſs which we feel. But excellent perſons have been here miſtaken, as James and John were. And not only ſo, but when the paſſion is up, the judgment itſelf is ſeldom to be truſted, for it inclineth us to err in all things that concern the preſent buſineſs. Therefore, ſtill remember the difference between true zeal and falſe; and know that he that is upright in the main, and whoſe zeal for chriſtianity is ſound, may yet have much zeal that is unſound with it.

Firſt.

First. It is an ill ſign when your zeal is raiſed about ſome ſingular opinion which you have owned, and not for the common ſalvation and ſubſtance of the Chriſtian faith or practice. Or at leaſt, when your odd opinion hath a greater proportion of your zeal than many more plain and neceſſary truths.

Secondly. When your zeal is moved by any *perſonal intereſt* of your own; by honour or diſhonour; by any wrong that is done you; or any reputation of wiſdom or goodneſs which lieth on the cauſe. Or at leaſt when your *own intereſt* hath too large a proportion in your zeal.

Thirdly. When your zeal is more for the intereſt of your adherents than for the church, and the common cauſe of godlineſs and chriſtianity, and can be content that ſome detriment to the whole may further the intereſt of you and your adherents.

Fourthly. When your zeal tendeth to hurt and cruelty, and would have God rather to glorify his *juſtice* by ſome preſent notable judgment, than his mercy by patience and forgiving: and when your ſecret deſire of *fire from heaven*, or ſome deſtruction of the adverſaries is greater than your deſire and prayer for their converſion. The ſure mark of true zeal is, that it is zealous love: It maketh you love your neighbours and enemies more fervently than others do: But falſe zeal maketh you more inclined to their ſuffering, and to reproach them.

Fifthly. It is an ill ſign when your zeal is beyond the proportion of your underſtanding; and your *prudence* and *experience* is as much leſs than other men's, as your *zeal is greater*. True zeal hath ſome equality of *light* and *heat*.

Sixthly. It is an ill ſign when it is a zeal which is eaſily kept alive, and hardly reſtrained: for that ſheweth the fleſh and the devil are too much its friends. True zeal of the ſpirit doth need the fuel of all holy means, and the bellows of meditation and prayer to kindle it: and all is too little to keep it up in the conſtancy that we deſire. But carnal zeal will burn of itſelf without ſuch endeavours.

Seventhly.

Seventhly. It is an ill ſign when ſome *forward teacher* was the kindler of it; and not the ſober preaching of the truth.

Eighthly. And it is an ill ſign when it burneth in the ſame ſoul where *luſt*, or *wrath*, or *pride*, or *malice* burn; and, when it proſpereth at the ſame time, when the love of God, and a heavenly mind and life decay. The zeal of a ſenſualiſt, of a proud man, of a covetous man, of a ſelf-conceited empty perſon, can hardly be thought a ſpiritual zeal.

Ninthly. And it is an ill ſign when it carrieth you from the holy rule; and pretendeth to come from a ſpirit which will not be tried by the ſcripture: or when it driveth you to uſe means which God forbiddeth in his word: and putteth you upon ways which the ſealed law and teſtimony condemn. It cannot be of God, if it is againſt God's word.

By all theſe ſigns you may eaſily perceive, how dividing zeal doth differ from the genuine Chriſtian's zeal. The one is a zeal for ſome *ſingular opinion:* the other is a zeal for *godlineſs* and *chriſtianity*. The one is kindled by ſome intereſt of our own religious reputation; the other is kindled by the intereſt of the *will* and *glory of God*. The one is a burning, hurting zeal, even the ſame which hath made matter for ſo many martyrologies, and frightful hiſtories, by inquiſitions, torments, priſons, flames, maſſacres and bloody wars: and the ſame which hath ſilenced ſo many faithful miniſters, and diſturbed ſo many ſtates and churches: the the other is a zeal of love, which maketh men fervent in doing good to others: the one cauſeth men to revile and deſpiſe, and cenſure, and backbite, and zealouſly to make others ſeem odious, that the hearers may abate their love to them. The other maketh us value all that is good in others, and to hide their nakedneſs, and to make them better, and to provoke the hearers to love and to good works. The one tendeth to diviſions and ſidings and ſeparations, and diſtances from our brethren; and to feed contentions: the other is a zeal for unity, amity and peace. The one is the complexion

complexion of the weak and childiſh, the proud and ſelf-conceited, the peeviſh and ſurly ſort of profeſſors: the other is the zeal of ſolid knowledge, and of the prudent, humble, meek and well grounded ſort of chriſtians. The one is a zeal which flieth moſt outward, againſt the ſins of other men, and can live with pride, and covetouſneſs, and ſelfiſhneſs, and ſenſuality at home: ſuch ſerve not the Lord Jeſus, but their own bellies. Rom. xvi. 17, 18. The other beginneth at home, and conſumeth all theſe vices in the heart; and as zeal increaſeth, humility, meekneſs, love, ſelf-denial, temperance and heavenly-mindedneſs increaſe. The one is eaſily got and eaſily kept, and hardly kept under! O how eaſy is it to get and keep a contemptuous, cenſorious, backbiting, dividing or perſecuting zeal! But the other is not ſo much befriended by ſatan or the fleſh, and therefore muſt be preſerved by prayer and meditation, and very great diligence. How hard is it to keep up a zealous love of God and man, and a fervour in all our heavenly and ſpiritual deſires! Abate but your *diligence*, and this will preſently decay: when the fierce contending, hurting, ſeparating and perſecuting zeal doth need no ſuch fuel or labour to maintain it: The one is kindled by the inflaming cenſures of ſome raſh and paſſionate perſon, that knoweth better how to *kill love* than to *cauſe it*; or by the ſingular conceits of ſome divider; or by the backbitings of ſome *Doeg*, or malicious calumniator: the other is kindled by the humble and heavenly preaching of the goſpel, and by meditations on Chriſt's example, and a ſtudy to imitate him and his ſaints in patience, forbearance, forgiving others and doing good. The one is a zeal which carrieth men from the ſcripture, to pretences of ſuch revelations, inſpirations and impulſes, as have no proof, but the feeling and fancy of the perſon: or at leaſt to abuſe the word of God, and plead it for that which is condemned: it provoketh men to ſome unlawful practice, under pretence of miſinterpreted texts, and of good ends and meanings. The other ſtill putteth you upon good, and ſtriveth againſt

evil, and goeth for trial of every cauſe to the law and to the teſtimony. Laſtly, the one is a zeal which pretendeth the Spirit, and yet goeth contrary to the common workings of the Spirit, in the moſt part of the beſt and wiſeſt chriſtians. But the other is the common vital heat, which animateth all the body of Chriſt, and actuateth all his living members; and keepeth up love and holineſs in the church; and is the ſame in all humble heavenly chriſtians in the world. It will be of great uſe to you, in order to your own and the church's peace, to underſtand and obſerve the difference between theſe contrary ſorts of religious zeal.

There are many women and paſſionate Chriſtians, who are earneſt in prayer, but ſometimes they run into this miſtake, to judge ungroundedly of the anſwer of their prayers, by ſuch conceits and ſtrong apprehenſions of their own, as never came from the Spirit of God at all. And it is a great wrong to God, to be made the author of man's infirmities and errors, and of that which is contrary to his word. And yet it is a very pitiful caſe as to the offenders; becauſe it is uſually the ſin of perſons that are very upright and honeſt in the main, and that are very ſerious in their prayers to God; and of ſuch as have naturally ſuch weakneſs of reaſon and ſtrength of affection, as that they are leſs *blamable*, though leſs curable than others are.

There are very few that take their impulſes and reſolutions for the Spirit's anſwer of their prayers, but they had before an underſtanding moſt inclined to that opinion, or elſe a bias upon their affections, bending them that way; or ſomething in themſelves which occaſioned the ſcales to turn that way.

Obj. *But I did bring my mind to a pure impartiality, and prayed to God that he would ſhew me the truth, be it what it would: and that if this were not right he would bleſt it and never ſuffer it to go on: and the more I prayed, the more I was confirmed that this is the right.*

Anſ. All this may be, without any of God's approbation of the concluſion which you think is his anſwer to your prayers. For whilſt you prayed that God would

would turn your mind from it, if it were not right; yet at that time your judgment was inclined to it; or your affections at leaſt: and it is an eaſier thing to ſpeak impartial words in prayer, than to get an impartial unprejudiced mind. And when you think your mind is brought to an impartiality, alas, there may be many deep roots of prejudice which you obſerve not; and there is ſcarce one of a thouſand, who thinketh that he prayeth with a pure impartiality, but his opinion, diſpoſition, inclination, intereſt, or ſecret affection, doth bias and ponderate his mind more to one ſide than to the other. But if you were never ſo willing to know the truth, yet there are paſſions in you, and corruptions and ignorance, and former errors, which may all do much to hinder you from knowing it; and may breed many falſe apprehenſions in your mind; and yet may cheriſh them with as dear an eſpouſal and affection, as if they were certainly from God.

And moreover, you have been guilty of former ſins; and whether God for any of them may leave you to run into miſtakes, you know not. Or whether any preſent ſelf-conceitedneſs may occaſion him to leave you to miſtakes. But the principal part of my anſwer is this, God hath no where promiſed to reveal all his truth to you, becauſe you deſire him ſo to do. It is not every prayer of yours, which he hath promiſed to hear and grant; but only thoſe which are agreeable to his will: His will is either his command or his promiſe.

You may not ſuppoſe that God will grant all the prayers which are put up in obedience to his commands: but only that you ſhall be no loſers by ſuch obedience; but he will give you that, or ſomething which ſhall be as good for you. It may be God's command, that godly children ſhould pray for the lives of their ſick parents; and that parents pray for the converſion of their ungodly children, and that we pray for all men; and yet it doth not follow that we ſhall have the very thing which we obediently pray for. But it is his *promiſing will* which is the meaſure of our *hope*, as his *commanding will* is the rule of our obedience. Whatſoever

ſoever he hath promiſed he will certainly give us. Now God hath no where promiſed in his word, that he will reveal the true meaning of every text of ſcripture, to every godly perſon that aſketh it.

Praying is but one of the means which God hath appointed you to come to knowledge. Diligent reading, hearing and meditation, and the counſel of the wiſeſt is another means. Even to dig for it as for ſilver, and to ſearch for it as for hidden treaſure, and to continue ſo doing, and to wait at the poſts of wiſdom's doors, that knowledge may come into you by degrees and in time. God hath not promiſed you true underſtanding upon your prayers alone, without all the reſt of his appointed means: nor that you ſhall attain it by thoſe means, as ſoon as you deſire and ſeek it; for then prayer would be a notable pretence for lazineſs, and they that would not be at the labour of ſtudy, meditation or conference, might ſave all their pains, and go to God and aſk wiſdom of him, and he would give it them. Even as idle beggars think without working to get an alms to maintain them in their ſlothfulneſs. If inſtead of all our reading, hearing and meditation, we could but *pray*, and ſo get all the knowledge which other men ſtudy, labour and wait for, it would be too cheap a way to wiſdom. *Solomon*, that got it by prayer, commandeth us very great diligence to get it.

It is very conſiderable, not only that Chriſt increaſed in wiſdom in his youth, but alſo that he would not enter upon his public miniſtry (as is aforeſaid) till he was about thirty years of age. When it had been more eaſy for Chriſt to have got all knowledge by two or three earneſt prayers, than for any of us.

Moreover you muſt pray according to God's *will of precept*, not only in the matter, but in the manner of your prayers. And there may be more ſelfiſhneſs, and many other corruptions in the manner of them, than you diſcern. And there are many things which with ſubmiſſion you may lawfully pray for, which God hath never promiſed you at all: you may pray for the life

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of the ſick, and for the converſion and ſalvation of all your relations, and of thouſands of others, which God will not give you. Otherwiſe all the relations of every true Chriſtian ſhould be ſaved, yea, and all his enemies, and all the world. To apply all this, it may be you are in doubt, whether this or the other be the meaning of ſuch a text of ſcripture? Or whether you ſhould proceed in ſuch a buſineſs, or ſhould join in the uſe of ſuch preaching and prayers, or not? And when you have prayed earneſtly, you are confirmed *for* one way, and *againſt* the other. And perhaps all this is but to be confirmed in your error: for firſt, you came with diſtempered affections; or with ſuch a *fear* of going one way rather than the other, that the very *fear* doth much to cauſe your apprehenſions. Or you came with the guilt of former ſin. Or you have ſome partiality on your ſpirit, and a ſecret inclination to one ſide more than to the other; or ſome overvaluing of your own underſtanding, perſon, or prayers. Or you are lazy and preſumptuous; and think God muſt teach you that in one hour, and at a wiſh or prayer, which others better than you muſt learn with prayer and twenty years ſtudy, diligence, and patience. Or you think God muſt needs reſolve you in that which he never promiſed to reſolve you in. Where hath he promiſed upon all your prayers that ever he will teach you in this life the ſenſe of every text of ſcripture? If ever he *promiſed* this, he will perform it. And is it to one Chriſtian, or *to every praying Chriſtian*, that he hath promiſed it? If to *every one*, why are we not *all of a mind?* Why be not all as wiſe as you? What need we commentaries then? Or what need have others of your revelations? If it be but to *ſome*, who be *thoſe ſome?* And how ſhall we know them? And how know you that you are of them? And why do not thoſe ſome condeſcend to write an infallible commentary upon all the Bible, when they themſelves are taught it of God, that ſo we may doubt and differ no more?

But if you ſay that it is not the meaning of every text, that God hath promiſed to make known to you

when you pray, but of ſome few, how will you know which thoſe few be? And where is the promiſe which maketh this difference? Except only that to all Chriſtians, he hath promiſed to reveal ſo much as is neceſſary to their ſalvation. But if you will pray for more, your belief of your ſucceſs muſt not go beyond the promiſe. If you will promiſe to yourſelves, you muſt perform for yourſelves.

Obj. *But hath not God bid us believe that we ſhall receive whatever we aſk, and promiſed to believers that they ſhall receive it?*

Anſ. He hath firſt made a law to command you to pray and then made a promiſe to grant what you pray for according to his will, that is according to his command and promiſe, and hath made your believing of this promiſe, one of the conditions of his fulfilling it to you. So that if you believe not his power and promiſe, you ſhall not have the thing promiſed. But if you pray and believe, and withal uſe thoſe other means with diligence and patience, which God hath appointed, you ſhall know in that meaſure, as is ſuitable to your ſtate, (for God hath not promiſed the ſame meaſure of knowledge to all true believers.) So that this is all that the promiſe giveth you, and not that you ſhall know all that you pray to know, and that immediately.

Obj. *But then you leave us at utter uncertainty, whether we have the anſwer of our prayers or not?*

Anſ. Not ſo: but the anſwer of your prayers muſt not be tried by your conceits, but by God's rule. If you pray for that which you have neither a *command* nor *promiſe* for, your prayer is ſin, and your anſwer can be nothing but God's rebuke, or your own deluſion. But if you pray for that which you have a command for, but no particular promiſe, then you have only the general promiſe that your prayer ſhall not be loſt, but ſhall bring down either the thing you pray for, or ſomething elſe which the wiſdom of God ſeeth to be beſt for you and others; and to his ends. And this is all that you can warrantably *believe*. But if you pray for

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that which hath both a command and a particular promiſe, (as the pardon of ſin, and neceſſary grace and life eternal to a perſevering believer) you may be ſure that this prayer ſhall be granted in kind. So that you are not to judge of the anſwer of prayers, by your conceit and paſſions, but by the promiſe of God, which you muſt believe will be fulfilled. Faith muſt tell you whether your prayer be accepted. Nay, if you ſhould receive health or wealth or gifts for yourſelves or others, when you have prayed for them; you cannot tell whether it be a *merciful* anſwer to your prayer, or a *judgment*, unleſs you try it by faith according to the promiſe. I have nothing to ſay of the caſe of miracles, but this: if God promiſe a miracle, you may believe it becauſe it is promiſed. If he perform it without a promiſe, then either you muſt not believe it till it is done, or elſe your faith muſt be a miracle alſo; and then the faith itſelf is its own juſtification. But miracles are now ſo rare, that all ſober Chriſtians will take heed how they expect them, or over-haſtily believe them; and eſpecially how they take their own belief for a miracle. All the talk that ſome men make of a *particular faith* may be tried by what I have here ſaid.

To conclude; the warning which I give you in this caſe, is from long and ſad experience. I have ſeen too many very honeſt-hearted Chriſtians, eſpecially *melancholy* perſons and *women*, who have been in great doubt about the opinions of the Millenaries, the Separatiſts, the Anabaptiſts, the Seekers, and ſuch like, and after earneſt prayer to God, they have been ſtrongly reſolved for the way of error, and confident by the ſtrong impreſſion, that it was the Spirit's anſwer to their prayers; and thereupon they have ſet themſelves into a courſe of ſin. If you ſay, how know you that they were miſtaken? I will tell you how. Firſt, Becauſe they have been reſolved contrary to the word of God. And I know, that God's Spirit did firſt make a ſtanding rule to try all after-impulſes by; and whatever impulſe is contrary to that rule, is contrary to God's Spirit. The law and the teſtimony are now ſealed, and all ſpirits

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to be tried by them, Iſa. viii. 20. Secondly, Becauſe I have found their impulſes contrary to one another. One hath been reſolved for infant baptiſm, and another againſt it: One hath had a revelation for prelacy, and another againſt all prelacy: One hath been confident of an anſwer of prayers for Antinomianiſm, and another for Arminianiſm: One for a public communion, and another to deteſt it: And both came in the ſame way. Thirdly, Becauſe I have ſeen abundance of prophecies of things to come, which people have this way received with the greateſt confidence, to prove all falſe. Fourthly, Becauſe I have ſtaid till many of the perſons have found by experience that they were deceived, and have confeſſed it with lamentation. And fifthly. Becauſe perhaps I know more of the nature of prejudice, affection, melancholy, feminine weakneſs, and ſelf-conceit, and of tempting God in the way of prayer, and of Satan's transforming himſelf into an angel of light, than every reader will know till they have paid for their learning, as I have done. Many that have no ſuch impulſes themſelves, are yet ſo much taken with the reverence of others, that they are very apt to be ſeduced by their confidence. When ſo great a man as *Tertullian* was deceived by *Montanus* and his propheteſs; when ſuch a one as *Hacket* could deceive not only *Coppinger* and *Arthington*, but abundance more, ſome taking him for the Meſſiah, and ſome by his breathing on them thinking that they received the Holy Ghoſt; when *David George* in *Holland*, and *John of Leyden* in *Munſter*, and *Behmen Stiefelius*, and ſo many more pretended prophets in *Germany*, could deceive ſo many perſons as they did; when the pretended revelations of the Ranters firſt, and the Quakers after, could ſo marvellouſly tranſport many thouſand profeſſors of religion in this land; I think we have fair warning to take the counſel of *St. John*, *Believe not every ſpirit; but try the ſpirits, whether they be of God.* It is a pitiful inſtance of the good, old, learned *Commenius*, who ſo eaſily believed the prophecies of *Daubritius*, and the reſt which he hath publiſhed: yea, when he ſaw

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the prophecies fail, yet when he adjured the prophet to ſpeak truth, and got him to ſwear as before the Lord that it was truth, this ſeemed enough to confirm his belief of him: whereas if he had been as well acquainted with the nature of melancholy and hyſterical paſſions as many others are, he would have known that as ſtrange things as thoſe he recorded of the man or woman, may be done without a divine inſpiration. And that it is no wonder if that perſon ſwear that his words are true, who is firſt deceived himſelf before he deceive others. For a crack-brained perſon to believe his deluſions to be real verities, is little wonder.

I have many a time myſelf converſed with perſons of great honeſty and piety, (though of no great judgment) who have ſome of them affirmed, that they had angelical revelations; and ſome of them thought that the Spirit of God did bring this ſcripture or that ſcripture to their mind in anſwer to their prayers, and to fix their religious opinions; and were ſo very confident that what they affirmed was the certain truth or voice of God, that I have been ſtricken with a reverence to their profeſſions, and with a fear leſt I ſhould reſiſt God in reſiſting them. But reſolving to take none on earth for the maſter of my faith, but to try the ſpirits whether they be of God, by going to the law and teſtimony, I was conſtrained to turn my reverence into pity. For I found that their ſeeming revelations were ſome of them ſcripture-doctrine, and ſome of them contrary to the ſcripture. As for that which is already in the ſcripture, what need I further revelation for it? Is it not there ſufficiently revealed? Can their words add any authority to the word of God? And have I not God's own miniſters and means to help me to the knowledge of his word? And as for that which is *contrary* to ſcripture, I am ſure that it is contrary to the will of God; and if an angel from heaven ſhould preach another goſpel to me, I muſt hold him accurſed, Gal. i. 7, 8. So that if theſe perſons ſhould have the appearance and voice of an angel ſpeaking to them, I would deſpiſe it as well as the words of a mortal man, if they be againſt the recorded word of God. But

But by what I have ſeen and heard, I know that it is a great temptation to ſome weak Chriſtians to hear one that is much in prayer, ſay, Take heed what you do: have no communion in this or that way of worſhip; nor in this or that opinion, for I am ſure it is againſt the mind of God: I once thought as you do, but God hath better made known his mind unto me. But ſaving the due reſpect to the honeſty of ſuch perſons, aſk them, How ſhall I know that you are in the right? If they ſay, I will not reaſon the caſe with you, but I know it to be the mind of God; tell them that God hath made you reaſonable creatures, and will accept no unreaſonable ſervice of you; and you have but one Maſter of your faith, even Chriſt: therefore, if they believe that themſelves, which they can give you no reaſon to believe, they muſt be content to keep their belief to themſelves, and not, for ſhame, perſuade any other to it, without proof! If they ſay that God hath revealed it to them, tell them, that he hath not revealed it to you, till they prove their divine revelation: if God reveal it to them but for themſelves, they muſt keep it to themſelves. If he reveal it to them for others, he will enable them to make ſome proof of their revelations, that others may be ſure that they ſin not in believing them. If they ſay, that the ſcripture is their ground, tell them that the ſcripture is already revealed to all; and if indeed what they ſpeak be there, you are ready to believe it: but if they pervert the ſcripture by falſe interpretation, or abuſe of it, and miſapply it, none of this is the work of the Spirit of God.

If they ſay that the Spirit hath told them the meaning of the ſcripture, ſay as before, that is not told for you which is not proved to you. The ſcripture is written in ſuch words as men uſe, of purpoſe that they may underſtand it; and is to be ſufficiently underſtood by all men that hear it, though they have no revelation. God hath alſo ſet paſtors in his church to teach it; if, therefore, revelations be ſtill neceſſary to the underſtanding of the ſcripture revelations, then the

ſcriptures ſeem to be in vain; and theſe laſt revelations muſt again have new revelations to the right underſtanding of them alſo. The truth is, it is very ordinary with poor fanciful women, and melancholy perſons, to take all their deep apprehenſions for revelations. And if a text of ſcripture come into their minds, they ſay, Thistext was brought to my mind, and that text was ſet upon my ſpirit; as if nothing could bring a text to their thoughts, but ſome extraordinary motion of God: and as if this bringing it to their mind, would warrant their falſe expoſition of it. To conclude, decry not the neceſſity of the ordinary ſanctifying work of the Spirit, to bleſs the ſcripture to your true illumination and ſanctification; but if any pretend to any other revelations or inſpirations, or expoſitions of the ſcriptures which they cannot prove to you, deſpiſe them not, but modeſtly leave them to themſelves; but take heed that the reverence of any one's holineſs, tempt you not to depart from the certain, ſufficient word of God, and draw you not into any hereſy, or ſeparation, or opinion, contrary to God's ſtanding law.

I have known ſome that have lived long in doubts and fears of damnation, who have turned *Anabaptiſts*, and ſuddenly had comfort: and yet in a ſhort time they forſook that ſect and turned to another. I have known thoſe alſo that have lived many years in timerous complaints, and fears of hell; and they have turned to the *Antinomians*, and ſuddenly been comforted. The reaſon of all this is plain to any judicious obſerver. 1. The perſons are ignorant and never had the right knowledge and ſkilful improvement of the ſound doctrine, which at firſt they ſeemed to embrace. And 2. The power of conceit and fancy brought them comfort or quietneſs in their change. And the novelty of the matter, and greatneſs of the change, with the conceited excellency of the opinions and party did make them think that they were now grown very acceptable to God. To this may be added, that as a life of holineſs hath far more oppoſition from the devil, the world and the fleſh, than the changing of an opinion or join-

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ing with a party hath; ſo it muſt be harder to get and keep that comfort which is got and kept by faith and holineſs, than that which is got by ſuch an eaſy change. We ſee among us what abundance of perſons can live like beaſts in moſt odious whoredoms, drunkenneſs and rage; or like devils in bloody cruelty againſt the good, and yet be comforted becauſe they are of the church of *Rome*, which they think is the true church. As if God ſaved men for being of ſuch a ſide or party! And why may not others eaſily take ſuch kind of comfort? O therefore labour for well grounded faith and ſolid knowledge, that you may attain the true evangelical comforts, and that your ignorance may not prepare you for deceit.

And that you may not be like children toſſed to and fro, and carried up and down with every wind of doctrine, by deceived and deceitful men. Nor have need to go to the devil to be your comforter, nor to ſteal a little unlawful peace from parties and opinions, as if there were not enough to be had in Chriſt, and holineſs, and eternal life.

Chriſt owneth no diſciples which are not in one of theſe two ranks; either *teachers* by office upon a lawful call, or *learners* who ſubmit to be taught by others. When his Miniſters have made men his diſciples, they muſt afterward *teach them to obſerve all things whatſoever he hath commanded them.* Mat. xxviii. 19, 20. And a learner muſt hear, and read, and diſcourſe in a learning way, by humbly aſking the reſolution of his doubts, acknowledging the weakneſs of his own underſtanding, and the ſuperiority of his teachers. This is the common ruin of raw profeſſors, that they preſently grow proud of a poor ignorant head, as if it were full of knowledge and ſpirituality: and while they continue hearers, they continue not *diſciples* or *learners*, but come with a proud and carping humour, to quarrel with their teachers, as poor ignorant men in compariſon of them; and therefore chooſe them a heap of teachers according to their own opinions; and all this while they have ſuch a deſire to be ſomebody, and to

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vent their ſeeming wiſdom, that they can hardly ſtay from being teachers themſelves, till they have any thing like a lawful call. Whereas if they would have kept in a rank of humble learners till they had grown wiſer, they might have preſerved the church's peace and their own.

It is an eaſy thing to turn the native heat of religion into the feveriſh outſide zeal about words, or circumſtances, or ceremonies, whether it be for them or againſt. I know that one party will cry up *order*, and the other will cry up *ſpirituality*, and both will ſay that God maketh not light of the ſmalleſt matters in religion, nor muſt we: and in this general poſition there is ſome truth.

It would make a knowing Chriſtian weep to ſee, in theſe times, what cenſures and worſe are uſed on both ſides, about the wording of our prayers to God! How vile and unſufferable ſome account them, that will pray in any words that are not *written down for them!* And how unlawful others account it to pray in their written forms: ſome becauſe they are forms, and ſome becauſe that papiſts have uſed them, and ſome becauſe they are, or have been impoſed! When God hath given them no command, but to pray in faith and fervency, according to the ſtates of themſelves and others, and in ſuch order as is agreeable to the matter, and in ſuch method as he hath given them a rule and pattern of. But of all quarrels about *forms* and *words*, he hath never made any of their particular determinations, no more than whether I ſhall ſtudy the words, or if neceſſity require it, preach extempore.

It is a wonder how they that believe the ſcriptures, came firſt to make themſelves believe, that God maketh ſuch a matter as they do, of their ſeveral words and forms of prayer: that he loveth only *extemporary* prayers as ſome think, and hateth all preſcribed forms: or that he loveth only preſcribed forms as others think, and hateth all extemporary prayers. Certainly in Chriſt's time both liturgies by *forms*, and alſo extemporary prayers were uſed: and yet Chriſt never interpoſed in

the controverſy, ſo as to condemn the one or the other. He condemneth the Phariſees for making *long prayers* to cover their *devouring widows' houſes*, and for their praying to be ſeen of men: but whether their prayers were a ſet form, or whether they were extemporary, he taketh no notice, as telling us that he condemned neither. (And it's like the Phariſees' long form was, in many things, worſe than ours, though the pſalms were a great part of it: and yet Chriſt and his apoſtles oft joined with them, and never condemned them). Nay, as far as I can find, the Phariſees and other Jews were not in this ſo blind and quarrelſome as we; nor ever made a controverſy of it, nor ever preſumed to condemn either form or extemporary prayers.

Is it not by the law of nature the parents duty to teach their children the Lord's prayer, or a pſalm, though it be a form? And why not then other words which are agreeable to their ſtate? And he that taught his own diſciples a form and rule of prayer, and telleth us that ſo *John taught his diſciples*, ſaith alſo to his apoſtles, *As my Father hath ſent me, ſo ſend I you.* The truth is, by making them teachers of his church, he did allow them to teach either by forms or without, as the cauſe required. All the ſcripture is now to preachers, a form of teaching: and when we read a chapter, we read a preſcribed form of doctrine: and it hath many forms of prayer and praiſe, and forms of baptizing, and adminiſtering the Lord's ſupper. If you ſay, that the apoſtles had an infallible ſpirit, I anſwer, true: and that proveth that their doctrine was more infallible than other men's; but not that they only and not other men may teach by the way of forms: therefore let us learn to be more merciful and moderate in our judgment.

An affection of ſingularity in indifferent things doth either come from ſuch ignorance as thoſe were guilty of, Rom. xiv. or moſt commonly from pride, though you perceive it not yourſelves.

If it be to go in a meaner garb than others, and as ſome not to put off the hat, or as others to go barefoot,

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of in a diſtinguiſhing habit, that all men may ſee and ſay, this is a ſingular perſon in religion: 'tis eaſy to ſee how this gratifieth pride. Humility deſireth not to be eſpecially taken notice of; and in all things lawful to do as others do, doth gratify humility. It is ſtrange to ſee how much ſtreſs ſome people lay upon their ſingular modes of worſhip, habits, geſtures and expreſſions, when they have taken them up! They would have all to follow them. Here you ſee the myſtic Phariſee! Paul became a Jew to the Jews, and all things lawful to all men to ſave ſome, 1 Cor. ix. 19, 20. I pray you mark his words. It had been no ſtrange thing, if he had become wiſe to win the fooliſh, and ſhewed himſelf ſtrong to win the weak, &c. But to become as a *Jew* when he circumciſed *Timothy*, and ſhaved his head becauſe he had a vow, and to be as under the law to them that are under the law, without law to them that are without law, and to become as weak to them that are weak, to be made all things lawful to all men to ſave ſome; this is far from the religion of proud pretenders.

What abundance of things do many now blame, and cenſure others for as temporizers, which they have nothing againſt (that may be called reaſon) but only that their neighbours uſe them? If a man ſtand up at the profeſſion of the belief, or when pſalms or hymns of praiſe to God are ſung, he conformeth to the geſtures of the congregation; this is made his diſpraiſe, which is his praiſe. Is not ſtanding a fit geſture to profeſs our faith in, and to praiſe God? Or is it praiſe worthy to be odd and ſingular in the church, and not to do as the congregation doth? *Auſtin* profeſſed his reſolution, in all ſuch geſtures and lawful orders, to do as the church did where he was; and *Paul* would have us with one mouth as well as with one mind to glorify God. I intreat theſe men to mark whether it was Chriſt or the Phariſees that came neareſt to their way, and whom they moſt imitate? Was it for going too far from ſinners that the Phariſees cenſured Chriſt, or was it not for eating and drinking with them? though he did it not to harden them in their ſin; but as a phyſician with

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the ſick to heal them. The caſe is plain; but corrupt nature more favoureth the ſeparating zeal of the Phariſees than the loving, winning zeal of Chriſt, and makes it much eaſier to be imitators of them, than of him. This going too far from thoſe we ſhould win, doth not only loſe our advantage, but greatly tendeth to harden them in all their prejudices againſt a religious life, and hinder their converſion, and ſo undo their ſouls.

In a word, wo be to the reformer, who ſeareth not running to the extreme contrary to the error and ſin which he would reform. Think and talk more of your faults and failings againſt others, than of theirs againſt you; and if you fall into the company of backbiters, that are diſhonouring their rulers or their paſtors, or who are telling how bad their neighbours are, labour to purify theſe ſtinking waters, or turn the ſtream; ſay to them, O friends, how bad are we ourſelves! what pride is in our hearts! what ignorance in our minds! ſo wanting are we even in the loweſt grace, humility, that we have ſcarce enough to make us take patiently ſuch cenſures as we are now pouring out upon others. Take notice of all the good in others which appeareth: be more in commendation of all the good which indeed is in them, who differ from you in opinion. Firſt, you would ſhew yourſelves more like to God, who is love, and unlike to Satan the accuſer. Secondly, you would ſhew an honeſt impartial ingenuity, which honoureth virtue wherever it is found. Thirdly, you would ſhew an humble ſenſe of your own frailty, who dare not proudly contemn your brethren. Fourthly, you would ſhew more love to God himſelf, when you love all that is of God whereſoever you diſcern it, and cannot bear to hear his gifts and mercies undervalued.

Remember alſo that you have never learned the chriſtian art of ſuffering aright, till you can ſuffer not only by bad men, but by men that otherwiſe are good; not only by enemies, but by friends, not only by them that bear the ſword, but alſo by ſome who preach the word; and till you will not by oppreſſion be made mad, nor driven from you innocency.

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Even thoſe forms of liturgy which now are moſt diſtaſted, were brought in by the moſt zealous religious people at firſt. The many ſhort invocations, verſicles, and reſponſes which the people uſe, were brought in when the ſouls of the faithful did abound with zeal, and break out in holy fervors into ſuch expreſſions, and could not well endure to be mere auditors, and not vocally bear their part in the praiſes of God, and prayers of the church. And in time thoſe very words which ſignified their raptures, were uſed by formal hypocrites, without their zeal who firſt expreſt them, and ſo being made dead images and uſed by rote, in a ſenſeleſs canting, it has now become a point of zeal to avoid them as unlawful, though they were received from the predeceſſors in piety of thoſe men that now refuſe them. But though the higheſt expreſſions of zeal are moſt loathſome when counterfeited and turned into a mere lifeleſs form; yet it is the privation of life which is the fault of the thing, and not the thing in itſelf. Reſtore the ſame ſpirit to thoſe words, and they will be as good as they were at the beginning. What is the inference from all this? Why, firſt I would adviſe you to look more to the things themſelves, and leſs to the perſons; and regard the honour of humanity, if you regard not the honour of religion. Secondly, that you truly underſtand what intereſt ſuch zealous perſons as yourſelves had in thoſe opinions, forms, and practices at the firſt; that if you will avoid them for ſome men's ſake, you may think the better of them for other men's, ſo far as to bring you to ſome impartiality and a pacific ſpirit. Thirdly, that you ſuſpect that zeal in yourſelves, which you think ſo much miſcarried in your anceſtors.

Of all parts of religion, (I know not how it comes to paſs) men think that *negatives* are ſufficient for *peace*. If a man live not unpeaceably, nor provoke any to wrath, he is thought a ſufficient friend to peace. And therefore, it is that love and peace do ſo little proſper: when Satan and his inſtruments do all that they can by fraud and force againſt it, we think it enough to ſtand

by and do no harm. It is the *peace-makers* that Chriſt pronounceth *bleſſed*, Matt. v. 9. Here he that is not with Chriſt and the church is againſt it. Why ſhould we think ſo much diligence in hearing, reading, praying, &c. is neceſſary to the promoting other parts of holineſs, and nothing neceſſary to love and peace, but to do no hurt? Is it not *worthy* our labour? And is not our labour here as needful as any where? Judge by the multitude and quality of the adverſaries; and by their power and ſucceſs. It is a mark of hypocriſy to go no further in our duties of godlineſs, than the ſafety of our reputation will give us leave. And is it not ſo in the duties of love and peace? If the kingdom of God be righteouſneſs and peace, then what we would do to promote God's kingdom, we muſt do for them, Rom. xiv. 17. And if dividing Chriſt's kingdom is the way to deſtroy it, (and Satan is wiſer than to divide his own kingdom, Matt. xii.) then whatever we would do to ſave the kingdom of Chriſt, all that we muſt do to preſerve and reſtore the peace of it, and to heal its wounds.

Queſ. But what would you have us do for love and peace, and againſt its contraries?

Anſ. Firſt, *preach* and *write* if it be your calling. Secondly, let the cauſe of love and peace be much in your open and ſecret prayers to God. Thirdly, inſtruct all that learn of you with principles of love and peace; and labour to plant them deep in their minds, and make them as ſenſible of the evil of the contraries, as of any other ſin. Unleſs divines and parents do take this way of bringing up the people and children in this kind of doctrine, that love and peace may become their religion, the church is never likely to be recovered. Fourthly, in all your conference, labour (ſeaſonably and prudently) to inculcate theſe matters on the hearers minds, and to bear your teſtimony againſt cruelty and diviſion. Fifthly, put ſuch books into people's hands as plead beſt the cauſe of love and peace: among others, get men to read theſe, biſhop *Uſher*'s ſermon on Eph. iv. 3. biſhop *Hall*'s Peace-maker; Mr. *Jere-*

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miah *Burroughs*'s Heart-diviſions, and Mr. *Stilling fleet*'s *Irenicon*, and all Mr. *Duries*. Sixthly, diſgrace not your doctrine by the badneſs of your lives; but be as much more holy than they are, as you are more peaceable, that they may ſee it is not a carnal unholy peace that you deſire: but theſe things belong to the following directions: *Finally, brethren, farewell, be perfect; be of good comfort; be of one mind; live in peace; and the God of love and peace ſhall be with you*, 1 Cor. xiii. 11. Phil. iv. 9. 1 Theſ. v. 23. *And the God of peace ſhall bruiſe Satan under your feet ſhortly*, Rom. xvi. 20. *Now the God of peace be with you all, Amen*, Rom. xv. 33.

Martyrdom for love and peace is as honourable and gainful, as martyrdom for the faith.

Directions to the Paſtors both to prevent and heal Diviſions.

THE practice of which the author doth humbly and earneſtly beg of them, as with tears, upon his knees, for the ſake of Chriſt, that purchaſed the weakeſt with his blood; for the ſake of thoſe who hope to live in peace with Chriſt for ever; for the ſake of thoſe who are in danger of turning to errors, or contemning godlineſs, through the ſcandal of our diviſions, to their damnation; for the ſake of the church; for the ſake of the rulers, that they may have the comfort of governing a quiet and united people; and for their own ſakes, that they may give up their account with joy to the chief ſhepherd and biſhop of our ſouls, and not with terror for the conſuming and ſcattering of his flock. And the author humbly beggeth of them all, that this country may but *ſee* and *feel* that the paſtors do underſtand, believe, conſider, and obey that will of God, which theſe texts of ſcripture do expreſs: Pſa. xv. 4. Matt. xxv. 40, 45. Matt. xviii. 6, 10. 2 Cor. iv. 3. 1 Cor. ix. 16. Acts xx. 20, 24, 28, 33. 1 Pet. v. 2, 3. Luke xxii. 24, 25. 1 Theſ. v. 12, 13. 1 Tim. v. 17. Phil. i. 15, 16, 17, 18. Acts xxviii. 30, 31. Rom. xiv. 1, 2, 3, 4. Rom. xv. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Rom. xiv. 17, 18, 19, 20.

Alas!

Alas! our preaching, praying, conference and living, tell all the world that we are weak. How few are there that be not either ignorant, or injudicious, or imprudent, or dull and lifeleſs, or dry and barren, or of a ſtammering tongue, in our miniſterial work! And in ſo high a work, any one of theſe is a loathſome blemiſh. If we are put to defend our religion, or any neceſſary part thereof, how weakly and injudiciouſly is it uſually done! In a word, our great diviſions among ourſelves, with our cenſures and uſage of one another, do tell all the world not only that we are weak, but that too many of us account one another to be worſe than weak, even intolerable. And ſhall we, by our own weakneſs and faultineſs, become the people's ſcandal, and tempt them to undue ſeparations; and when we have done, be impatient with their weakneſs, while we overlook our own?

When the young and ungrounded ſort of Chriſtians do, by their errors, pride or paſſions, diſturb the church's peace and order, it is the paſtors that are uſually firſt aſſaulted by their abuſes, and therefore are moſt impatient and exaſperated againſt them. And it were well if we were ſo innocent ourſelves, as that our conſciences need not call us to inquire, Whether this be not partly the fruit of our own miſcarriages? However, ſeeing both the eminency of our grace, and the nature of our office, ſhould make us more ſenſible of the church's dangers, and more ſolicitous of its ſafety, than the private members are; I think that the chief part of the duty is incumbent upon us, which muſt be done in order for the prevention of theſe maladies and for the cure. And therefore I think that the principal work of a director in this caſe, muſt be with the miniſters of Chriſt themſelves. The church's peace lieth chiefly upon our hands; and if we miſcarry, and will not underſtand inſtruction, nor bear admonition, nor do our parts, how little hope will be left of our tranquillity? The body muſt needs languiſh, when the phyſician is as bad as the diſeaſe.

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On every ſide it is the paſtors of the flocks that are accuſed, by thoſe of the adverſe party, as the chief offenders. One ſide ſaith, "It is you that teach the people errors, and put ſcruples into their minds, and lead them into contempt of order and authority;" and the other ſide ſaith, "It is you that proudly uſurp authority which Chriſt never gave you, and lord it over God's heritage, and, by your own invention, lay ſnares before the people, to divide them, and will not ſuffer them to unite in their proper centre, and agree in the primitive ſimplicity." And whilſt each ſide is thus accuſed by the other, they have all the greater cauſe to ſuſpect themſelves; becauſe it ſeemeth to be agreed on all hands, that it is the paſtors who are principally in fault, though it be not agreed what the fault is, nor which party of the paſtors muſt bear the blame.

And indeed where are there any factions but there are miniſters that head them, and that both cauſed them at firſt, and keep them up? It is but reaſonable, therefore, that we all ſuſpect and ſearch ourſelves, and perhaps the lot may find out that *Achan* who is thought moſt innocent; and *Jonah*, who is not the worſt in the ſhip, may be the man; and he may be the *Judas* who is laſt in aſking, Maſter, is it I?

Beſides all that ſhall be intimated in the following directions, theſe cauſes of the people's weakneſs and diviſions are ſo openly manifeſt in too many paſtors, that they cannot be concealed or excuſed.

Firſt. There is ſo much ignorance in many, that they are not able judiciouſly to edify the flocks, nor to teach ſound principles in a ſuitable manner and method to their hearers. Who can teach others that which they never learned themſelves?

Secondly. Too many know not the weakneſſes of the vulgar, and therefore neither juſtly reſolve their doubts, nor anſwer their objections.

Thirdly. And how cold and unſkilful are many in the application of that doctrine which they have tolerably opened? And ſpeak the truths of the living God without any affecting reverence or gravity. And talk

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as drowſily of the evil of ſin, the need of grace, the love of God in Jeſus Chriſt, yea, of death and judgment, heaven and hell, as if it were their deſign to rock their hearers to ſleep, or make them believe that it is but an hiſtorical fiction which they act, and that nothing they ſay is to be believed! There is no need of any more forcible means to entice men to ſin, than to hear it preached againſt ſo coldly: nor is there need of any more to teach men to ſet light by Chriſt and grace, and heaven itſelf, than to hear them ſo heartleſsly commended. We ſpeak a few good words to the people in a reading tone, like a child that is ſaying his leſſon, as if we believed not ourſelves: and then we blame the people for being no more edified by us; and we look they ſhould be much affected with that which never much affected the ſpeakers. If Chriſt himſelf, who preached with authority, and uſed to awaken them with an (*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*) did yet convert no more than he did; what can we expect upon our drowſy and dry diſcourſes, but drowſineſs in the hearers, if not contempt?

The aforeſaid unacquaintedneſs with the people, and their weakneſſes, doth make many teachers loſe their labour, while they meaſure the common people by themſelves. And therefore experience hath oftimes conſtrained me to ſay, that after all their learning in the univerſities, ſuch paſtors as never converſed familiarly with the poor and vulgar of the flock, and tried the exerciſe of perſonal inſtruction upon them, are no more to be regarded in any controverſies about the paſtoral work and diſcipline, than an unexperienced phyſician, or pilot, in many caſes of their profeſſions; which maketh many learned, ſelf-conceited doctors become the plagues, while they think themſelves the pillars of the church. Some make a formality and a ſnare of the gift of extemporary expreſſion, and by a prepoſterous care to avoid all forms, teach not the people with that diligence which is neceſſary, but leave their minds void of thoſe orderly, well-ſettled, ſecondary means, which ſhould help the firſt: and thus while

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ſome neglect the ſoul of religion, others neglect the body of it: between them both it is too much neglected, almoſt all.

It is needful to the people's edification and union, that their paſtors excel them much in knowledge and utterance, alſo in prudence, holineſs, and heavenlineſs of mind and life. Becauſe God uſeth to work by means, and vary the ſucceſs according to the quality of the means and inſtruments, we may well conclude that the gifts and holineſs of the paſtors are very excellent and needful helps to the people's ſettled piety and peace. Where theſe are wanting, the order and means are wanting, by which God uſeth to convey his bleſſing.

Our grave attire will go but a little way to keep up our reputation, without ſome better teſtimony of our worth. An empty head, a ſtammering tongue, dry, dull and diſorderly preaching; ſenſeleſs, cold or confuſed praying; vain and frothy converſation, will much abate the reverence of our perſons.

'Tis their double meaſure of the ſpirit of wiſdom and goodneſs, which muſt procure a double meaſure of honour to the miniſtry. If we excel ever ſo much in learning, it will not ſuffice, unleſs we excel in our proper miniſterial gifts; preaching, exhortation and prayer, which are the works of our office. Yea, tho' we excel them in all theſe abilities, it will not ſerve the ends of our miniſtry, unleſs we excel them in holineſs, and every Chriſtian virtue. The devil knoweth more than miniſters, and if he have a tongue, he wanteth not utterance. He is the moſt excellent and honourable, who is moſt like God, and hath moſt of his image. God hath more propoſed himſelf to man's imitation in goodneſs, than in greatneſs: he hath not ſaid, *Be great, for the Lord your God is great:* but, *walk in the light, as he is in the light. Be ye holy, for the Lord your God is holy.* To be great and bad is to be able to do miſchief: to be learned or ingenious, and bad, is to be wiſe to do evil; and to be a crafty, ſubtle inſtrument of the Devil. Jer. iv. 22. It was no laudable deſcription of Elymas, Acts xiii. 8 and 10.

Satan

Satan never would transform himſelf into an angel of light, nor his miniſters into the miniſters of righteouſneſs, nor would Phariſees and hypocrites cover oppreſſion by long prayers, if light, righteouſneſs, and long prayers were not laudable in themſelves, and neceſſary in the preachers of the word of God; and had not the appearance of good in them, as a cloak for wickedneſs.

If therefore Satan, or any of his miniſters, would have men credit their falſehood and wickedneſs, they muſt pretend to light and holineſs. He that would keep up the true honour of his miniſtry, and be accepted with God, and eſteemed by good men, muſt do it by real light and holineſs. An ungodly miniſter hath a rooted enmity to the holy doctrine which he preacheth, and holy duties and life which he exhorteth the people to. How well, ſincerely, readily, faithfully, they are like to do the work which they are enemies to, you may eaſily judge. Rom. viii. 7. I know that they are not enemies to the honour and maintenance; and therefore may force themſelves to do much of the outſide work; but where there is an inward enmity to the life and ends of it, we can expect but a formal, inconſtant diſcharge of ſuch unpleaſing duty. Truth is for goodneſs: The knowledge which maketh you not good is loſt, and hath miſſed its end. If therefore your love to God and man, your mortification and unblameableneſs of life, your ſpiritual mindedneſs, be no greater than the people's, (or perhaps much leſs) do not wonder if you loſe your honour with them, and grow very contemptible in their eyes. Mal. i. 10, 14. ch. ii. 1 Sam. ii. 17, 24, 30. If, as Moſes, you ſtand nearer to God than the people do, you muſt be more holy than they; and your face muſt ſhine with the beams of God in the people's eyes.

If ever the church is healed of its wounds, it muſt be by the peaceable diſpoſition of the paſtors and people. If ever men come to a peaceable diſpoſition, it muſt be by peaceable doctrine and principles; by a full and frequent explication of the nature, pre-eminence, and power of love; that they may hear of it ſo much, and

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ſo long, till love be made their religion, and become as the natural heat and conſtitution of their ſouls. To promote this, the aged, experienced, and ripe kind of miniſters, and private kind of Chriſtians, muſt inſtil it into young Chriſtians and ſcholars, that they may have nothing ſo common in their ears and ſtudies as uniting love.

If I knew that man by whom the ſalvation of my flock were like to be more promoted than by me, (whatever infirmity of my people's might be the cauſe) I ſhould think myſelf a ſervant of Satan, and an enemy of ſouls, if I were againſt it. So Chriſt be preached, and the people inſtructed, ſanctified and ſaved; what if it be done by another rather than by me; have I not liberty to do my beſt? Shall I oppoſe the goſpel and its ſucceſs? God forbid I, or any faithful miniſter, ſhould be guilty of ſo odious a ſin! I ſpeak without reſpect of perſons. It is eaſy and common, both in churches and private aſſemblies, to preach ourſelves while we ſeem to be preaching Chriſt; and by our perverſe preaching to ſeek diſciples for ourſelves, even when we are preaching up ſelf-denial, and ſeem moſt zealous for the ſaving of ſouls. Acts xx. 30.

He is the ſtrongeſt Chriſtian, and the moſt godly man, who hath the greateſt love to God, and heavenlineſs of mind and life. And this may be the caſe of many a one, who, by ſome error about the circumſtances of diſcipline and worſhip, is yet under ſome miſtake. He that offendeth me by his miſtake, though he be weak in judgment in ſome points, may yet be a far ſtronger Chriſtian than I who ſee his error. He may have more love to God and man, more humility and ſelf-denial, &c. Let us therefore eſteem men according to the image of God upon them, and not deſpiſe them as weak in grace, becauſe they are weak in this point of knowledge: though ſtill their errors are not to be owned.

Beware of following the heated leaders of a party, and of aſſuming the lead yourſelves; for thoſe who follow you, when God ſheweth them mercy, they will repent, and give you but little thanks for your labour.

The diſorders of the church may convince us of our error, in following thoſe whom we ſhould have led into better diſcipline.

There are not many of the tumults that have coſt the lives of thouſands about religion, but are kindled by the young, injudicious profeſſors. Hiſtorians tell that when King *Francis*, of *France*, had forbid the reproaching the Popiſh way of worſhip, and ſilenced the miniſters for not obeying him; many of the hot-brained people took this way of provoking them, by hanging up pictures and libels in the ſtreets, (but that was not the way of God) and began that perſecution, (by provoking the king) which coſt many thouſands, if not hundred thouſands, their lives before it ended. And the *ſynod* at *Rochel*, which refuſed the grave counſel of *Dupleſſes*, *Dumullen*, and many others, were ſtirred up by the people's zeal, and ended in the blood of many ſcore thouſands, and the ruin of the power of the Proteſtants in *France*. Abundance of ſuch ſad inſtances might be given, if England needed to go any where elſe for matter of warning than to itſelf. He that after the experience of this age, will think it fit to follow the conduct of injudicious zealots, will be left as inexcuſable as any man who never had a ſight of hell.

But if you will do all things good and lawful to win men, and offend them by no unneceſſary thing, and yet ſtand your ground, and ſtir not an inch from truth and ſoberneſs, piety or peace, to pleaſe any people in the world, this way ſhall do your work.

Let it alſo be obſerved, When paſtors fall into parties, they always draw the people after them. Some take one ſide and ſome the other. If the officers divide, the ſoldiers will. If one ſide ſuppreſſes the other, 'twill nevertheleſs increaſe the ſchiſm, while the people will pity and plead for the party that is trodden down. As to the younger and emptier ſort of miniſters, it is no wonder if they underſtand not that which they never had opportunity to ſtudy, or have taken but a taſte of; but it were to be wiſhed that they were ſo humble, as to confeſs that they are yet but beardleſs; and that time and long ſtudy is neceſſary to make them

them as wiſe as they think they are. O that the miniſters of Chriſt were once ſenſible, not here only, but through all the chriſtian world, what a plague the conjunction of their ignorance, contentiouſneſs, and their dividing, ſelfiſh zeal, hath been to the church of Chriſt! And what they have done againſt the ſouls of men, by violence and by heading parties, and by laying heaven and hell, and the ſalvation of their ſouls upon the opinions which they never underſtood, by departing from the primitive ſimplicity, to maintain their ſide and ſanctity by backbiting and reproaching others, whoſe perſons perhaps they never ſaw, nor ever once ſoberly diſcourſed with face to face. Yet they make it their piety to revile by hearſay, and judge in a cauſe they never heard, nor underſtood. If ever God ſhew mercy to his church, he will give them paſtors after his own heart, who ſhall abound in light and love; and lead the people into concord upon the ancient terms, and make it their work to put this love-killing ſpirit to death, whether it work by ſtriving diſputes, or dividing principles and practices, or by reproaching others; by corporal cruelty, or by a religious, cenſorious cruelty, which doth not kill nor ſtrike men; but unchurch and damn them.

Are not the *ſons* of *Levi* yet refined, when they have been in ſo many furnaces and ſo long? When wiſdom, holineſs, and humility are their nature, and ſelfiſh pride and worldlineſs are cured, this wrinkled, malignant enmity will then ceaſe, and an honeſt emulation to excel one another in wiſdom, and love, and all good works, will then take place; and then we ſhall not like drunken men, one day fight and wound each other, and the next cry out of our wounds, and yet go on in our drunken fits to make them ſtill wider.

I ſhall end theſe directions by recommending the following ſcriptures, which by the bleſſing of God, may lead you to the ſpirit and practices I have been treating of: Iſa. ix. 6, 7. xl. 11. xlii. 1, 2, 3, 4. xliv. 3, 4, 5. Ezek. xxxiv. 2, 3, 4, 5. Iſa. xi. lxv. xxv. Iſa. ii. 3, 4, 5. Mal. ii. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Zec. ix. 9. Matt. xi. 29. Luke iv. 18. Mark iii. 21. John iv. 32, 34.

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Chap. ix. 4. Luke xxii. 24. Matt. xx. 25, 26, 27. John xviii. 36. Luke xii. 14. 1 Pet. v. 2, 3, 4. 2 Cor. i. 24. Matt. xxiii. 8. 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2, 3. 2 Cor. x. 8. xiii. 8, 10. Acts. xiii. 18, 19, 20, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34. 2 Cor. xii. 5. 2 Tim. ii. 23, 24, 25. 1 Tim. iii. 2, 3. 1 Tit. i. 7, 8, 9, 10. 2 Cor. x. 3, 4, 5. Rom. xiv. 1. xv. 2, 3. Phil. iii. 15, 16. Eph. iv. 2, 3. Phil. ii. 3. James iii. 17. 1 Theſ. ii. 5, 6, 7. Gal. v. 22. 2 Cor. x. 1. Gal. vi. 1. Col. iii. 12, 13. 1 Tim. vi. 11. Tit. iii. 2. 1 Pet. iii. 4. Lev. xix. 18. Rom. xii. 9, 10. ch. xiii. 10. John xiii. 34, 35. ch. xv. 12, 17. Gal. v. 14. 1 Theſ. iv. 9. 1 Pet. i. 22. ch. ii. 23. Matt. v. 44, 45. ch. vi. 14. ch. v. 39, 40, 41. 1 Theſ. v. 12, 13, 14. 1 Cor. ix. 19. 1 Cor. viii. 1.

Queſtion. To what purpoſe do you ſet together all theſe words of ſcripture, without any expoſition, or telling us what you conclude from them?

Anſwer. I avoid all gloſſes, that you may not ſay, I have impoſed any thing of my own upon you, which is not the mind of your Lord himſelf. I ſet them together, that ſuch as overlook them may have a deeper ſenſe than they have had; firſt, of what is the true ſpirit of a Chriſtian; ſecondly, of what is the office of the miniſtry; and which way they are to win ſouls, ſilence gainſayers, extirpate errors, prevent or cure ſchiſms, and ſecure the church's peace.

As for thoſe who can ſeriouſly read all theſe words of the Spirit of God, and yet can find in them no matter of correction, without a commentary and argumentations, I have no more to ſay to them at this time, but to add Chriſt's next words, John xiii. 18. *I ſpeak not of you all; I know whom I have choſen.* I ſhall annex a few texts that characteriſe a ſpirit contrary to Chriſtianity, and the faithful miniſtry, and with them I ſhall conclude. 1 John iii. 12, 13. Heb. xi. 4. John viii. 44. 1 Sam. xxv. 25. 1 Sam. xxii. Ezra. iv. 13, 15, 16, 17. Eſt. iii. 8. Dan. iii. 12. Dan. vi. 5. Amos vii. 12, 13. Matt. xxiii. 29, 30, 31. John xi. 48. Acts iv. 1, 2, 17, 18 Gal. iv. 29. 3 John 9, 10, 11. 1 Theſ. ii. 14, 15. Luke ix. 54, 55.

THE END.

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Nov. 1948
Paul Mertz